

Inseparable

By: jay believe

Jack has become very close to Jamie after the battle with pitch, the two of them have become each other's best friends and Jack has become an older brother figure to Jamie. One day, Jamie is kidnapped by 3 sadistic men while playing a game in the park with Jack and the rest of his friends. Rated M for mature, this story contains graphic topics such as abuse and attempted SA.

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Monopoly

Chapter 1 Monopoly

Jamie Bennett was having a fantastic time this wonderful crisp march night, it was one of the last days of spring break and the cold was starting to disappear a little more each day to reveal a warm spring ahead.

But that didn't keep his best friend Jack Frost from visiting him.

Jack lay across from Jamie, sort of floating a few feet above their game board, while the young boy squatted above the multi coloured game, contemplating his next move.

Jamie happened to notice the winter spirit was having a great time with this odd little game so far, it was all about buying properties and getting money from them to the point where you ran the whole game. There were quite a few rules and regulations to follow.

But that seemed to be what Jack enjoyed most, partly since he broke just about all of them.

At this point the game had fallen apart and Jack was reviling in the destruction.

"ok... ok !" the young boy snickered," You just landed on my square... now Jack frost the leader of monopoly."

"Yes my good chap?" Jack scoffed trying to put on a playful accent.

Jamie giggled,"for once you actually have to pay me something." With that Jamie wore a smug expression holding out his hand expectantly for some multicoloured money.

Jack snickered as a playful glow entered his ice blue eyes and he crossed his arms.

"Alright then.... I'm robbing the bank...."

Jamie's lips curved into a smirk as he rolled his eyes, shaking his head.

"You..... you can't rob the bank!" Jamie snickered.

"why not?" the winter spirit shot back, that mischievous trademark grin sliding onto his face.

"Because... it's against the RULES, although you really haven't been paying much attention to any of them."

"Jamie, I'm Jack Frost... I do what I want. At this point you should know that better than anyone."

"That doesn't apply to the game Jack," Jamie sighed smiling, "will you at least give me one chance to make any money?"

Jack groaned eyeing his large collection of bills in his hand, teasingly rubbing them on his cheek in a showing off sort of way. "I don't know, you see I'm kind of strapped for cash right now Jamie."

Then like a flash Jack swooped downward and snatched three 500 dollar bills from the box below.

Jamie's eyes grew wide, "HEY!" Quickly he got up and began to jump for the few pink bills, "Give those back!"

"I don't know..." Jack sighed just slightly above Jamie's reach, "I kind of need them."

"NO you don't!" Jamie laughed.

"Well I have to pay you back!" Jack argued.

That's when Jamie stopped jumping like a trained seal for fish and gave Jack this expression of fake annoyance that the spirit couldn't help but find endearing.

"Jack."

The winter spirits finally looked up from his stolen cash and gently rubbed it against his cheek teasingly.

"mhhhhhhhh?"

The boy shot his hand backward without looking, pointing out the pile of multicolored money where Jack once was at the game board.

Jack looked over sort of shrugged like he didn't understand

"what?"

"Jack there is literally nothing left, you have all the money in the game."

The white haired teenager was silent for a moment.

"Well Jamie it's not my fault our monopoly world has fallen into an economic crisis, you should be more careful with your spending habits.."

With that Jamie shot upward and jumped onto Jack in midair, making the teen let out an unexpected yelp as he fell onto the boy's blankets below.

As they crashed down Jack let out a crisp laugh and immediately dropped the money from his hand.

"You're such a jerk." Jamie giggled, staring down at Jack who was contorted on the floor from his fall. The 18 year old let out a chuckle his eyes sparkling mischievously, "hey you were the one who suggested monopoly."

With a smirk and in a split instance Jack grabbed Jamie and flipped him on his back, before leaping on top of him himself and started tickling him under his armpits making Jamie let out a series of bewildered laughs.

"Jack stop!" Jamie gasped squirming under the older boys weight,
"Let me go!"

Jamie struggled in an attempt to escape, but Jack held firm, tickling Jamie even more.

"Please! Jack!"

"Not until you say Jack is the coolest monopoly player who ever lived." Jack grinned.

"what no!" Jamie gasped attempting to push Jack off him.

"I can't let you go if you don't say it!"

"Let me go!"

"no." Jack answered promptly.

"Stop!"

"You got to say it!"

"NO!" Jamie laughed, squirming. With a swift kick Jamie managed to wiggle from Jack's grip and proceeded to leap onto of the teenager tickling him furiously.

"Stop you little cockroach!" Jack laughed desperately, trying to cover his armpits from Jamie's frenzied finger tips.

Jamie smirked and slipped past teenager's hands, causing Jack's crisp laugh to become more frantic.

"Stop already! I've learned not to rob banks!" Jack giggled, trying to stop himself from squirming too wildly.

"NO way! This is payback for that monopoly game." Jamie tickled the teen harder causing Jack to gasp for breath, unable to control his body's contortions.

"I'm Sorry already!" Jack gasped tears springing from his eyes, "stop it!" In the chaos of the struggle Jack lost control of one of his feet and plunged his pale foot into Jamie's side, making the child let out a yelp as he fell off the bed.

Jack swiftly sat back up and threw himself closer to the side where Jamie had fallen, "Jamie, are you okay?" the teenager asked anxiously.

Jack went flying backward as he felt an overpowering force knock him back onto the covers of Jamie's bed. Blinking, the guardian peered upward and found Jamie smiling at the foot of his bed, large pillow in hand.

"Yeah i'm fine." Jamie smirked, a playful glare sparkling in his eyes.

A slow smirk spread across Jack's pale features as he snatched the pillow below him and held it forward like a weapon.

"Ohh, you're going to get it now. I forgot how hard it is to remove cockroaches." Jack rushed forward and attempted to hit Jamie's side, but the child quickly dodged and rolled away.

"You should have figured that out after you hit me with that sofa." Jamie laughed and rushed forward to smack Jack with his pillow, only to miss his target entirely as Jack darted from his position to another.

The pair pillow fought aggressively, each vigorously dodging and weaving in their dance-like movements. Jack managed to hit Jamie a handful of times but found himself being hit just as often or a little less. Jack noted the improvement in Jamie's dodging and speed, compared to the first time that they had ever pillow fought, it was a massive improvement compared to his skills he had possessed only a few months ago. With a wild laugh Jamie threw himself at Jack with his loaded feathered pillow, causing the teenager to let out a yelp of surprise as he tumbled onto the bed, during his small fall Jack brushed against some of Jamie's mysterious creature books

that were teetering on the edge of his night table. The pile of books swiftly fell, leaping from the table top cliff like lemmings into the ocean below.

There was a loud thud as the books hit the floor, causing both boys to cringe at the sudden noise.

"Jamie, is everything alright up there?" The concerned boy's mother asked.

Quickly Jamie squeaked back, "sorry mom, just knocked some books off my table."

"What are you doing?"

"ERRR..." the boy stuttered and sort of looked at the floor clearly searching for some sort of excuse. Quickly Jack mouthed the words "mime practicing" and immediately Jamie blurted it out, last second realizing what he just said.

"what?" said the obviously confused mother.

Jamie glared at Jack and the teen shrugged and chuckled.

"Just dancing mom." Jamie responded quickly.

There was silence for a moment.

"ok, just be careful..." Jamie's weirded out mother replied.

Once they heard her footsteps walking away Jamie turned to face the smirking Jack, "seriously Jack? Is mime practice the first thing that pops in your head?"

"What? I thought you loved that sort of stuff."

With that, Jamie hit Jack with his pillow making Jack burst out into laughter as put one arm up defensively attempting to block further blows. Jamie giggled seeing the spirit's reaction before he threw his

pillow to the floor, taking in some deep breaths as he sat back down next to the teenager. Jack grinned at the boy playfully, with a soft grunt Jack lifted himself from the covers and sat up in a sitting position next to Jamie. With a swift movement, Jack gently pressed his knuckles into the crown of the brunette's head giving the child a playful rustle of his hair. Giggling Jamie smirked and pushed the spirit away.

"I can't believe you made me say that to mom." Jamie chuckled.

Jack's eyes narrowed playfully at his friend's accusation, "Hey, that's not true, I didn't 'make' you say anything."

"You might as well!" Jamie snorted.

Jack rolled his eyes, "Jamie, Jamie, Jamie. I understand, deep down you really do want to become a mime, it's okay, I understand that right now you're just lashing out.."

Jamie snorted and playfully elbowed Jack, which he quickly returned. Both boys laughed until Jamie heard the faint buzz of his cell phone on his crowded nightstand. The child's giggling subsided as he reached his entire body forward towards the top of his bed, straining to grasp the device like he was a little monkey reaching for fruit.

"That must be Rocky or Tina," Jamie grinned, finally snatching the tiny cellular device in his grasp, "I bet they want to know if we're still meeting up tomorrow."

"You bet." Jack nodded, grinning.

Still smiling, Jamie unlocked his phone and his new messages quickly popped up on his small screen.

It was almost like someone had slapped the child, Jamie's smile disappeared in a heartbeat and faded into a shy frown, removing any sign of joy from the young boy's face immediately.

Jack's smile dissipated instantly seeing the faint fear that had now invaded Jamie's expression. The boy stared down at his phone, his eyes slowly becoming less wide and instead becoming a more depleted half mask. Half expecting what he might see, Jack darted closer and glanced at the recent text messages faster than Jamie could react.

Jack caught a faint glimpse of a couple hateful comments from anonymous looking profiles, Jack felt his blood boil.

"Hey creep! Looking forward to seeing you in school soon! Watch your back!"

"Hey Jamie, because of you our group couldn't meet up this week, why are you such a crybaby?"

Jamie quickly blocked the accounts and turned off his phone, his face faded to a nervous expression.

Jack frowned and shook his head, "You know, you can tell your mom about that.."

Jamie shrugged and avoided Jack's gaze, "there's no point, those accounts are just burners, besides, even if I did somehow prove it was them, they would just get angrier and target me more."

Jamie stayed silent for a moment, causing Jack's body to stiffened, his grasp tightening on his staff. Jack paused and thought for a moment, before patting Jamie's arm.

"Hey, remember March break isn't over just yet, we still have tomorrow." Now grinning Jack slyly played with the staff in his hands, "Besides I might just have a surprise for you when we meet up with everybody."

Jamie's eyes widened as he quickly turned to look at the grinning spirit.

"What is it?"

Jack chuckled watching the boy's eyes sparkle with curiosity, the fear and anxiety once present drowned by excitement.

Jack leaned against his staff and smirked, "wouldn't be much of a surprise if I told you now, would it?"

"Come on Jack," Jamie moaned, "at least give me a hint."

The teenager smiled and shook his head ruffling the boy's hair playfully. "You'll like it, that's my hint."

"That's not fair, that's not a hint at all!"

"Jamie, we just finished a game of monopoly where I robbed the bank to pay you, at one point did it seem like I was playing fair?"

Jamie laughed and smiled, elbowing Jack lightly in the ribs. A spark of remembrance ignited in Jamie's face as he swiftly rushed downwards causing Jack to jump surprise by the boy's sudden movement.

"OH, I just remembered something," Jamie dug through the pile of books by his bed, "I was hoping you could give this to Bunny."

Jack felt his eyebrows raise as he watched the boy fish among his collection of note books, sketch books, and mysterious creature books, until he finally yanked out his jett black drawing pad. Leaping back on the bed he quickly flipped through the many sketches he had created. Finally, Jamie ripped one page from the book and handed it to the winter bringer next to him.

"This is for bunny," Jamie smiled shyly, "I thought it looked alright."

Jack softly took the page from the child allowing himself to scan over the colourful sketch. The teenager admired the detailed illustration of the guardian of hope surrounded by a group of colourful eggs in his Easter burrow. It was striking the amount of detail that Jamie had

incorporated into the sketch despite only seeing the guardian a handful of times during the past year after their battle with pitch. Somehow the boy had remembered the unique markings on bunny's fur and the unusual wiry look of the rabbit's eyebrows. For a moment, the faint flickers of anger towards the rabbit after their recent fight disappeared momentarily. Jack chuckled softly under his breath and turned to look at the boy watching him excitedly. The guardian dipped his head and confronted the anxiously awaiting boy.

"Jamie, he'll love it, you've really outdone yourself."

Jack felt his heart melt seeing Jamie's smile spread ear to ear.

"I kind of thought it was pretty good, I just didn't want to get ahead of myself."

Jack chuckled, eyeing the intricate patterns and designs on each egg surrounding the rabbit, "Nonsense, your sketches are fantastic."

Jack gently folded the drawing into four squares, before sliding the artwork into his back pocket for tomorrow.

Jamie beamed, "do you think we could see him soon?"

Jack gave a heavy dramatic sigh, "I suppose if you're bored of me, we could go see that oversized nervous wreck of a rabbit..."

Jamie softly punched the spirit's shoulder, "Very funny mister dramatic, I would never get bored of you."

Jack's eyes twinkled mischievously, "I don't know, aren't you his biggest fan or something?"

Jamie smirked and rolled his eyes, "Come on Jack, you know that title goes to Sophie."

Jack snapped his fingers and pointed towards Jamie in acknowledgement, "touche!"

Jamie sighed and crashed backward onto his bed, "I'm so jealous, I can't believe she got to see Bunny prepare for easter last year."

Jack sighed, "yeah it was pretty impressive. I'd suggest you see it this year but bunny's even more neurotic than usual."

Jamie raised an eyebrow and turned to peer at the teenager, his expression slightly more anxious, "so you weren't kidding around when you called him a nervous wreck?"

Shaking his head softly Jack twiddled the staff in his hands, "Well he's not a nervous wreck per say, he's just frustrated with me, I don't think I should ask him for any favours for a little while."

Jamie blinked, "is he still mad at you?"

Jack shrugged, staring at his staff nonchalantly, "it's not a big deal, he's just upset because of the storms, it's also getting closer to Easter and he tends to be stressed out getting ready for it. "

Jamie stiffened and bit his lip, his eyes trailing towards the ceiling.

"You mean the storms you made for me right?"

Jack's eyes widened and he turned around quickly to find Jamie gazing shamefully up at the ceiling.

Jack felt guilt wreck his conscience as he watched the child's face flood with guilt.

"I'm sorry I got you in trouble." Jamie whispered.

Jack quickly pulled himself closer to the child. "Jamie, you know that's not your fault. We talked about this. Bunny was mad at me, not you. I chose to do it."

A few faint tears sparkled in Jamie's eyes, swiftly the boy wiped them away and sat back up. "I know, but I hate knowing you got in trouble, it was a lot of snow days just to avoid some kids at school."

Jamie blinked back more tears as he frantically wiped away at his eyes. Jack watched the boy helplessly, his saddened heart begging him to pull Jamie into a hug.

"Why do those older kids bully me? It's not like I did anything to them." Jamie bit his lip, his body quivering, "maybe they're right, maybe there is something wrong with me.."

Upon hearing that sentence Jack quickly leaned forward and pulled the boy to his chest. Jamie froze slightly in the teenager's embrace, not expecting the intensity of the teenager's squeeze. Peering upward, the 11 year old caught sight of Jack's worried eyes scanning him over, his lips strained into a concerned frown. Jamie felt his eyes bubble with tears once more, frantically the boy scratched at his eyes and hid his face.

"Jamie, there is nothing wrong with you." Jack whispered softly.

Jamie sniffed and pushed his face into the cold navy blue fabric, frantically trying to cool his burning face. Jack's chilly hand began to circle the boy's shoulder comfortingly, allowing Jamie's sniffing to subside.

"I feel like I'm a burden." The boy muttered into the folds of Jack's hoodie.

Jamie felt a soft hand firmly pull his chin upward to confront the serious expression of the guardian of fun.

"You are not a burden, Jamie you're my best friend." Jack said unblinkingly.

Jamie's eyes widened, the fiery heat finally leaving his face.

"I'm your best friend?" The child whispered in disbelief.

Jack's serious expression soften, and a smile spread across his face as he smirked down at the wide eyed boy.

"Of course you are, you silly head." Jack pulled the boy into his chest, giving him another soft squeeze. "I'd be so bored if I didn't have you to hang out with."

Jamie smirked in Jack's grasp and slowly wrapped his own arms around the teenager, his tears drying on his rosey cheeks.

"You're such a creative person Jamie, your the best writer and sketcher I've met." Jack breathed comfortingly.

Jamie smiled and squeezed Jack back, causing Jack to chuckle softly.

"Besides," suddenly Jack noggied the child's head,"a weirdo like you needs someone to look out for them."

Jamie snickered and pushed the teenager away," yeah right, I can look after myself, thank you."

Jack raised his eyebrows and gave a Jamie a playful glare,"excuse me, who saved your butt from crashing into that tree last week?"

"Says the one who was steering the slead." Jamie retorted smirking.

"You were fine, your nose didn't bleed that much!" Jack shouted in protest.

Jamie let out a little laugh once again, pure cheer in the beautiful sound, before he rubbed his eyes and let out a tired yawn.

Turning over the white haired teen peaked over his shoulder and glanced at the clock, his eyes widen in surprise,"man, it's almost midnight."

Jamie blinked in surprise,"wow, I... I can't believe it's THAT late. I'm not even tire...."But before the boy could finish a much larger yawn escaped his lips.

Jack chuckled and stood up, smiling down at the exhausted 11 year old boy, who was rubbing his eyes fiercely, just barely able to fight his tired body's wishes.

"I think we should get to bed buddy." Jack smirked.

Jamie nodded in response and yawned again, slowly clambering over the covers of his bed and pulling back the dark blue blankets. Jack watched from the side allowing Jamie to adjust his pillow, before he lied down on the soft mattress. Smiling, Jack stepped forward and pulled the soft blankets up to Jamie's chest. The teen smiled at Jamie for a moment, before patting his shoulder and gently rising upward, quickly grabbing his trusty blue and brown staff. The spirit was about to open the window to leave into the night sky, when a small voice stopped him.

"Jack?" Jamie asked blinking in confusion, "where are you going?"

The teen gave him sort of a confused expression, "I'm heading back to North's place, I'll be back in the morning."

Jamie sat up and gave him a sad sort of expression, "oh...", he said rather disappointed.

Jack held his hand over the window handle, his hand floating in midair as he gave Jamie an uncertain look.

The boy bit his lip, "do... do you think you could stay here tonight....?" Jamie stuttered, clearly hoping he would with all his might.

A slow smile spread across the young spirit's face, and he finally pulled his hand away from the frosty window, giving Jamie a warm smile.

The boy looked slightly upward, seeming somewhat sheepish.

Jack snickered, "Sure.... Why not, less traveling anyway."

A great big smile exploded across Jamie's round face.

Jack snickered seeing his friend's reaction and leaned his curved staff against the small lamp table, turning over to Jamie, Jack grabbed one of the extra blankets at the edge of Jamie's bed. Throwing the blanket to the ground next to the bed, Jack began to adjust himself over the fleece fabric, allowing his lanky body to rest on the puffy material. Jack let out a content sigh as he began to lie his head down, while Jamie watched in confusion as the spirit made himself comfortable on the floor.

"Jack?"

"Yeah?"

"What are you doing?" Jamie snickered peeking down from his bed.

Jack blinked and rolled up on his back facing the child, "I'm getting comfortable, is that a crime?"

Jamie giggled, "no, but you can sleep on the bed you know."

Jack blinked in surprise, causing the child watching him to chuckle as he pulled the blankets beside him downward, allowing space for the spirit to crawl in next to the boy.

Jack hesitated, his frozen body ridged with momentarily confliction as he just stared at the bedside. Jamie's smile faltered seeing the spirit's hesitation, cocking his head in confusion Jamie gave the spirit a concerned look.

"What's wrong?" Jamie asked innocently.

Jack blinked again waking from his thoughts, "oh, I'm just.."

The teenager stuttered, and rubbed his neck tentatively, "I've just been having some bad dreams recently, I just don't want to wake you up if I have one."

Jamie blinked, "What are the dreams about?"

Jack shook his head and sat upward giving Jamie a reassuring smile, "nothing terrible, it's no big deal." Smirking Jack crouched, coming face to face with Jamie, "You sure you can spare the room?"

Jamie smiled and moved over immediately giving Jack a grin, "get in here already."

Jack chuckled and crawled on the side of the bed, positioning himself furthest to the side to allow Jamie most of the bedside. Despite the space given, Jamie quickly moved closer to the teenager and cuddled himself into the winter bringer's chest, nestling his head over Jack's heart. Jack stiffened in surprise, not expecting the child's hug, his eyes wide as he allowed Jamie to adjust himself. After a moment Jack's body relaxed and he smiled, gently placing a comforting arm around the child.

Jack reached over, switching off the lamp and slowly knelt back on Jamie's pillow, feeling it's comfortable form wrap around his lower neck.

Both of them were quiet for a moment as they both stared upward, gazing up at Jamie's glow in the dark star stickers, which always fascinated Jack. They did that for a few moments before Jack heard Jamie speak again.

"Jack?"

"Yeah Jamie?"

The boy was silent for a moment, "Do you think those kids will start pushing me into the lockers again... when the breaks over I mean..?"

Jack paused remembering the child's final couple days at school, where the boy had described being intimidated by the bullies who always seemed to be following Jamie and his friends around.

Despite not specifically going up to the boy and his friends, Jamie had felt extremely uncomfortable, always sensing that the older kids were watching him each time turned his back. Jamie clutched Jack's chest tighter, which snapped Jack out of his odd trance and Jack immediately wrapped his thin arms around the boy, in a protective and loving embrace.

"No one's going to hurt you buddy," Jack whispered clutching Jamie even tighter, "Not as long as i'm around."

A slow playful smirk soon rose on Jack's face, "Besides..."

Jamie turned upward to look at him.

"I'll freeze them into snowman if they go anywhere near you again."

Jamie giggled and snuggled closer into Jack's chest, making Jack himself chuckle.

Slowly Jack lay backward and began to close his eyes as he felt Jamie's warm breathing lulling him into a peaceful rest. Jack passed a glance downward to the young child, with his rose cheeks and chocolate brown hair, Jack smiled and squeezed him a little tighter. Jack sighed and brushed Jamie's rich brown hair reassuringly, a more determined expression written on his face. "I'll always be here." Jack whispered, feeling Jamie's head rest on his chest, "promise."

As the minutes passed Jamie's breathing began to slow and become more deep, and Jack could start to feel his own eyelids start to droop heavily, making it harder and harder for him to see the faint glow of the star stickers above. Jack sighed and finally began to shut his eyes, letting sleep take him.

"Jack?" Jamie whispered, quite clearly almost asleep.

"Yeah?" Jack answered, sounding just as tired.

Jamie's deep breathing continued for a moment, almost tricking Jack that he had fallen asleep, but then after a moment Jamie spoke quietly, "your the coolest monopoly player who ever lived."

Jack blinked his wide eyes for a second, before yet another warm smile spread across his thin lips. Peeking downward towards his chest he found Jamie finally asleep, clutching his stuffed rabbit in one hand and laying the other out on Jack's torso, quietly breathing.

Jack smiled and gently ruffled the young boy's hair, being careful not to wake him up, before he himself lay his head down on the cool pillow, shutting his eyes lightly.

With a content grin on his face, Jack clung to Jamie protectively, feeling the love he had wished for, so many years had finally been granted. As Jack felt himself start to sink into one of Sandy's dreams, he breathed in a wonderful sigh of relief feeling someone so close to him was near. As Jack finally floated to sleep with his heavy breathing soon matching Jamie's, a warm feeling of remembrance burned into his chest, it felt like he had his sister back. Jack clutched Jamie softly in his sleep, as the two boys snoozed peacefully, dream sand floating around them, no nightmares insight.

Kidnapped And Stolen

For those of you reading this you might have noticed I've been fixing up the story and rewriting some parts. It seemed like fun and I was kind of in the mood. If there are any changes you'd think would be cool feel free to leave a comment. The story might be a little funky for a bit because some chapters might not line up with others currently, but I plan to rewrite /fix each chapter one by one.

Thanks for the support.

Chapter 2- Kidnapped and stolen

Jack slowly opened his eyes, quickly being greeted by the sun rays of morning light beaming from Jamie's window. Blinking the spirit yawned, sleepily attempting to sit upward, but finding himself unable to as he felt a heavy weight on his chest. Still waking up Jack blinked in confusion and peered downward, finding the familiar form of Jamie cuddled comfortably to the teenagers chest. Jack's eyes widen as he stared down at the unconscious boy, the brunette's soft breathing matching with the immortal teenager's heartbeat. Jack's wide eyes soften and he smiled, gently he rubbed the boy's hair allowing himself to watch the child rest for a moment longer.

"It's been a while since I've had a decent dream," Jack mumbled to himself thoughtfully, rubbing his eyes with his free arm.

Jamie slowly began to stir, mumbling slightly in his sleep as he buried himself deeper into Jack's chest. Jack chuckled and gently placed a hand on the boy's shoulder, wiggling his arm softly.

"Hey buddy, wake up, it's time to get ready."

Jamie grunted and slowly opened his eyelids, sleepy sand still sprinkled in the corner of his coffee brown eyes.

Jack grinned and gave the boy another soft hug, causing the boy to wake up more.

"Ready to go see your friends?"

Jamie slowly sat up and rubbed his eyes, yawning and stretching. With a smile Jamie finally turned to the guardian of fun and gave a happy nod.

Jack grinned and ruffled the boy's hair, "come on let's get ready."

A little time later

Every one gathered round in a small circle, each cloven in snow shoes and light jackets as the last of the cold winter bit away at their cheeks and uncoated hands, with the exception of Jack who was balancing on his staff above the group of kids, with only some beaten up looking pants and a hoodie. Jamie beamed as all of his friends while they started to buzz excitedly, joking around joyfully along with the laughing winter spirit.

It had been known among his small group of close friends that Jack Frost had been becoming a more and more apparent member of the group's family, ever since their legendary battle with the guardians and boogie man himself.

Jamie's friends were now full fledged believers. It was kind of a nice change in a way, before the time of their new winter spirit friend Jamie was always looked upon as the oddball of the friendly group, often believing in things that most children had long since forgotten, or searching for creatures that were incredibly rare and more then likely didn't even exist. Jamie had always ranted things like, "this has to be the day we find the Easter bunny" or "I might have seen the tooth fairy last night!" It was sort of odd for his friends really.

Oftentimes they would just sort of humour him or tease him about it, but that never seemed to deter Jamie's bright light.

Rocky sometimes liked to tease Jamie saying he was going to grow up to be a conspiracy theorist.

Eventually after the massive battle and crazy fight, it didn't take long for his friends to start believing and pretty soon all Jamie could respond, to all his friends recounts of the amazing battle and frantic questions was "I told you so."

Maybe about a week after the unbelievable events had happened and his last encounter with the guardian of fun, Jamie awoke in the middle of a cool night feeling thirsty with a raspy throat and feeling desperate for water. The tired young boy came tumbling down the steps, rubbing his eyes and yawning loudly, wondering what sort of odd hour would be on their broken down old clock, and whether or not his mom would hear him downstairs. Once he had gotten his glass of water, he slowly wandered up the stairs absentmindedly, not noticing the sound of the strong playful wind calling to him outside, lulling him to check the kitchen window. Rubbing his eyes Jamie returned to bed, yawning and preparing himself for a long quiet sleep, expecting nothing. As his big eyes began to close and sleep was drifting ever closer, he felt his eyes slowly blink open again, feeling something cold hit his rosy nose, before melting just as quick as it came. In confusion he blinked slowly, trying to comprehend why his room felt so cool.

Took him about 7 seconds. (Jack had told him he counted.)

All of a sudden his tired eyes shot wide open in realization and he lept up so quick he nearly fell on the wooden floor, beaming ear to ear he sat up in his bed with exhilarated expression turning to the open window, that's when he finally saw the ecstatic fun loving winter spirit, standing beside it, looking just as happy to see him. Beaming Jamie raced forward and greeted the teenager in a massive hug that made him fall to the ground with a surprised shout, making them both laugh.

Since then Jack had always been a constant visitor to the young child, taking him out for flights, watching movies, or hanging out with

him and his friends.

The others quickly accepted their brand new frosty playmate, and quickly learned how much fun finding an ice spirit as your buddy really was.

When Jack wasn't visiting the guardians or creating blizzards, he was with Jamie, always searching for infamous leprechauns, bouncing on his trampoline or hunting for the impossible with his new group of believers. When they were together nothing seemed impossible. and Jamie always relished that.

As the months passed it seemed like Jack spent more and more time with his new best friend, if he didn't come one day he would double his time the next.

Each visit was an adventure for the both of them, especially when they made stupid music video's together, which they often did since they were so sick of the generic music on the radio. It was always a lot of fun and Jamie would always share the videos with his friends, who thought it was just as hilarious to see him or Jack in a long haired wig, lip syncing or horribly singing to a female's voice. If any adult had ever watched the small clips they would only see Jamie singing away by himself, laughing and shouting to the invisible spirit next to him. By any guess they would probably chuckle and think the playful child had a wild imagination, but thankfully Jamie and his friends knew better. Each time they made one, they ended up on the floor laughing their heads off to the point they were crying.

Even Guardians like bunny himself, had to admit, the pair were entertaining to watch.

For the past month Jack had been keeping a particular close eye on Jamie. A couple bullies had started cornering Jamie at school and knocking him against lockers, Jack had started to question Jamie about the bruises on his arms, for the first little while Jamie tried to brush it off claiming it was gym, only making Jack more suspicious. A few days after the tormenting, a worried Jack had followed Jamie to

school without him knowing and witnessed one of the bullies tripping him right before he got on the bus. It was at this point the enraged winter spirit froze the ground underneath the bully, making him yell out and slip, while Jack helped the confused Jamie back to his feet.

After the incident Jack constantly interrogated Jamie about what happened at school, and persisted on going with him there, even if it meant he had to abandon his job of blizzards and snow for a little while. Jamie quickly declined and explained his friends were looking after him and he was alright, but that never settled well with Jack.

Not long later, Jamie was punched at school and he returned home in tears, making Jack's protective embers burst into flame. Jack had thrown a total of 3 snowstorms in a desperate attempt to keep his friend home, that was until the other guardians had told him off and Jack was bitterly forced to let Jamie go for the last few days before march break.

Jamie's school managed to suspend the bully who had punched him, but the two others that remained liked to passively harass the boy by following him around when he was separated from his friends. Occasionally, the two bullies would mutter things just loud enough so the nervous boy could hear them in the halls, and would throw rough balls at Jamie in the gym whenever they played dodge ball.

Thankfully at this moment they were free now, and that was all that mattered, and Jamie was thrilled to be with his family, absolutely positive he was going to have a great time.

While Jack, Rocky and Cupcake laughed carelessly about the look on Tina's face when they had made a snowman on her doorstep, Tina (the taller red haired girl) stepped forward making Jamie turn his head towards her.

"Alright everybody, who wants to actually play manhunt?"

Quickly all 7 faces turned her way rapidly leaving their conversations behind and pumped for the hide and seek\tag game ahead.

"Alright!" Rocky shouted, the African américain boy with the tall dark hair, his voice slightly deeper than his twin Tommy.

"Let's do it!" shouted Cupcake.

"I guess I can!" smiled Nate quietly adjusting his glasses as he spoke.

With a smile Jamie turned to look up at his snowy friend, who in return looked down to see him, a chuckle escaping his lips.

Jamie grinned and returned his gaze to Tina, excited energy pumping within him.

Tina rolled her eyes, "ok, Who wants to be it."

Naturally the whole group of kids fell into silence, with Tommy (the kid with the red hat and blue jacket, being the mischievous twin of Rocky.) whistling to himself awkwardly in the background, making Jamie smirk down at his shoes.

"I'll be it." Jack chimed happily, making the whole group of kids look up excitedly, each with grinning faces.

Jamie felt his heart lurch, Jack was known for being the best player of this game for a reason and Jamie knew darn well that this particular round was going to be tough.

Tina beamed at the mischievous 18 year old and gave him a nod, "Alright then Jack," she then gave him this fake discipline expression and held up a knowing finger, "Just one rule..."

Jack leaned forward, pretending to look tough.

"yes?" He sounded off trying to act intimidating.

"No peeking this time." Tina half giggled.

Jack pretended to sound upset, "Awwwwwwwwwwww!"

Which earned a fair storm of giggling from the children around him, counting Jamie himself, who saw the spirit smirk at his friend's reaction.

"Seriously Tina!? I actually have to try!? Why don't you just stab me in the heart and tell me the easter kangaroo isn't real!" Jack scoffed, clutching his chest.

A great deal of chuckling arose at the last remark.

Tina snorted, "He's not a kangaroo."

"Ah ah ah.." Jack waved his finger in the air tauntingly while he floated just above their heads, "he THINKS he's not a kangaroo."

Everyone chuckled at the odd little remark making Tina herself roll her eyes and laugh.

Jack's eyes twinkled in amusement before he finally landed again.

"Alright everybody... Go hide... Because Jack Frost is on your tail..." he gave them all a sly smile, "and trust me I don't play easy."

Everyone grinned in eagerness, while Jack gave Jamie one of his playful "i'll tag you first" glances which Jamie returned with a "I don't think so" sort of smirk. Jack gave a snort and began to count, making the whole group of excited kids scatter like ants, each going in different directions.

While Jack counted away Jamie bolted running as fast as he could to the side of the small park, tearing through tree branches and bracken desperate to find the best hiding spot he could find. As he ran Jamie passed cupcake diving into some old blueberry bushes with an animated expression, along with Rocky and Tommy, who were both hiding in a tree chuckling, waiting for the game to really start. Jamie giggled and continued to run, already having an idea of where to go.

Rushing down the beaten woods path, Jamie couldn't help but feel pleased with himself, as he daydreamed about the look on Jack's face when he ended up being the last one left. By accident Jamie nearly tripped as he stumbled over a little stone, knocking him back to his senses.

The 11 year old continued to run, flying under the buds of the trees and leaping over rotten logs with moss growing all over them, charging ever on. At one point the playful wind rushed through the fresh smelling pine trees, brushing Jamie's hair as he galloped under the morning sun, teasingly freezing his cheeks.

Jamie glanced over his shoulder looking for a white haired teen, but failed to notice the slant of the hill in front of him, so it came as a big surprise as Jamie felt the ground momentarily leave his dependent feet. The boy let out a yip and tumbled downward, rolling down the hill into the thorny bushes letting out yelps and rolling further and further down. Jamie shut his eyes and hid his face as he crashed into the bush at the bottom of the bank, unknowingly to him his scarf had long since been abandoned at the top of the slightly ice hill, waving down at him gently.

After a second Jamie shot upward, covered in minor scratches, but unharmed nonetheless as he began to spit out the leaves stuck on his tongue in a disgusted manner. Jamie let out a gross sort of groan and wiped his face gently with one arm, before he slowly removed his gaze from the few leaves below and felt his expression change to utter surprise.

The young boy's eyes widened as he gazed right in-front of him, to discover a newly painted red van, still flashing with bright color.

Jamie blinked motionless, wondering what it was doing on the side of the road next to a park, when all of a sudden two young men popped out.

"I told you Eric, this van needs to be parked closer, it's no good this far away!"

The teenager who landed outside the doors seemed to be a little gruff looking for his age, from what Jamie could tell he guessed the man was the same age as Jack. he had a more scrawny structure accompanied by sideburns and a pimpled face.

Then the other male hopped out, (who Jamie guessed was Eric.)the man looked slightly older, likely in his younger twenties. His hair was blond and looked much more muscular than the other.

"Look Will, I can't drive up any further then this, if we go any closer..."

"yeah, yeah... whatever dumb shit."

Jamie just stared at the two men in shock and slight curiosity, not once had he seen these men before, and it was a marginally small population of people in his neighbourhood, and all of them were friendly. Maybe they were from out of town or something.

But Jamie's curiosity soon crumbled to the ground when the men finally stopped arguing and turned around, finding a wide eyed boy staring back at them from the bushes probably looking a little scared. The men seemed to look taken back at first, surprised by their little visitor and probably wondering how long he had been standing there, but then slow smiles spread across their cheeks and they both passed a nod to each other that made Jamie's heartbeat quicken.

The dark-haired teenager gave an odd smile and winked at the young boy," hey there buddy, you alright?" he asked in a deep voice, sounding warm and friendly," you lost there?"

Jamie didn't say anything, his breath just started to quicken slightly, as he gave the two men a deer in headlights sort of look.

But the skinny young man continued to talk to Jamie, wearing a comforting smile that seemed almost genuine," don't be shy, we're not here to hurt you. What's your name?"

Jamie was silent for a few seconds feeling his heart in his ears.

"J..Jamie." Jamie croaked, feeling himself sweat, wondering where his friends were.

The two men gave him a cheesier cat sort of smile, which made Jamie's blood turn cold," Jamie, nice to finally meet you kid."

Jamie blinked and finally moved his head downward, in a sort of crooked position," what?"

"Your mom's been looking for you," Eric's eyes became down casted, "She says there's an emergency back at the house, and she needed us to take you there."

The boy blinked at the man, clear distrust in his eyes, as Jamie felt himself getting more and more suspicious, he began to glance around the wooded area around him, searching for a sturdy enough stick he could use as a weapon. Jamie wasn't a stupid kid by a long shot, odd yes, but not stupid. For a while now he had known about the danger of strangers, his mom had taught him about the subject when he was fairly young, she had started teaching him shortly after his parents divorce.

Right now he was preparing to run at the slightest hint of clear danger, but if worse came to worse, he might need a weapon. Despite his anxiety, he felt compelled to speak, like it wasn't his choice to be silent anymore.

Eric seemed to notice this, as he got down on one knee and seemed to shape the expression of being somewhat remorseful," you see there was this car accident," the man sighed," and she was desperate... so she asked us."

Jamie blinked at them again, and to his own surprise felt a more critical tone take his appearance," Why couldn't she call Jane then?"

Both men seemed to stutter like they were clearly unaware of his mother's girlfriend, and immediately alarm bells went from jiggling to full-on blasting into Jamie's eardrums. Jamie began peering around the bushes-filled area until he noticed a thick tree branch buried in the bushes.

"Well you see Jane was busy, so..your mom called us, she's really good friends with us at her office." Eric nodded giving a little grin, "she's probably never mentioned us."

Jamie gave them wide-eyed looks that portrayed all the fear he had collected in his little body in the past few seconds, like lightning he began to shiver, "my mom doesn't work in an office."

It was at this point both of the men stopped smiling and gave Jamie the sort of look a child would give when they had been caught stealing from their parent's wallet, a wide-eyed expression that seemed to glow dangerously in the dark.

Jamie felt his heartbeat quicken enormously once he passed a glance at the pavement, wondering just how close he was to these creeps. Slowly Jamie crouched lower, reaching for the stick that was only a few feet away.

"Look kid." the heavily breathing Jamie quickly shot his head up to find much more worried and stern expressions on the two adults, "Your mom's hurt, you need to go to the hospital with us, so quit with the questions and get over here."

Will took a step forward but Jamie quickly shot backward, his body quivering violently as he just stood there staring at the two predators, wondering which way to go. It was at this point Jamie felt the familiar voices of his friends, calling his name up the hill. It was both a wave of relief and a gunshot of terror all at once.

"Jamie!?" "Where are you?" "Jamie?"

The voices floated down like lulling music, acting almost like angel's calls to a lost soul trying to find heaven, and had ended up in a much darker place, Jamie turned his gaze up the hill, watching for any sign of his much-needed pals.

After about 3 seconds he tore his intense gaze away and found both men staring at him like lions after a little gazelle, eyes focused and muscles tensed, Jamie felt himself panic when he started to feel his legs turn to jelly.

The young boy took one more glance up to safety, finally managing to grasp the stick in his hand, just out of view of the adults.

"Ummm... I'm sorry, I better go." Jamie whimpered before he turned around and started to sprint up the hill, but before he could go more than 6 feet he felt 2 rough hands grab him around the sides drawing him backward like a slingshot. At that point, Jamie let out a terrified yelp and began to panic as he struggled in Eric's hold.

Pure instinct fueled Jamie's brain as he took the stick he had in his hand and smashed it into the blond-haired man, just barely managing to bash him in the face.

Eric let out a loud cry and Jamie threw himself out of the man's grip, collapsing into the dirt. Jamie quickly got up but was tackled to the ground by the long-armed Will who began to try and cover Jamie's mouth with a yellow rag.

Jamie squirmed as tears shot down his face, twisting his head this way and that to avoid Will's hands.

"HELP ME! JACK! PLEASE!"

"SHUT HIM UP! SHUT HIM UP!" Shouted Will, already having problems holding the squirming boy down.

Will roughly grabbed Jamie's chin and proceeded to silence him manually with his hand. Jamie let out a cry and bit hard into Will's

hand.

Will let out a muffled screech and pulled back his hand.

"You little piece of shit!" Will fumed, reaching backward as the squirming Jamie continued to struggle.

"HELP!" The child screamed attempting to push the dark haired boy off him, "Let me go!"

Suddenly Jamie felt a sudden sharp pain as Will slammed the stick Jamie had previously used on Eric over his temple.

Jamie's eyes rolled back into his skull and he collapsed, momentarily knocked out.

Will and Eric worked quickly as the burly Will scooped up the boy and began to hurriedly run to the van, the unconscious child bleeding slightly in his arms.

"Little fucker." Eric hissed holding his bruised face in his hand while the other swung open the doors.

Both men hopped inside before shutting the doors. Will dumped the unconscious Jamie to the metal ground and began to jump upfront to start the van.

"Put the zip ties on that fucker," Will growled to Eric, "make sure that damn kid can't give us a damn concussion."

Eric snatched a large bag from the side of the van, shifting through the contents looking for the restraints.

Unknowingly to either of Will or Eric, Jamie began to stir from his forced unconsciousness blinking slowly as he started to take in his disturbing surroundings.

It took Jamie a few seconds to remember what was happening and where he was as he felt the cold uncaring feeling of the metal floor

below him, and the scent of blood drizzling down his wounded face. Even when Jamie did remember his predicament, he felt like he was in third person watching everything happen to someone half conscious. The boy eyed the faint crack of light from the van door, his mind becoming transfixed on the freedom of day. Eventually, his adrenaline began to kick back in, and Jamie began to urge himself into a better loaded position, anticipating his leap out the doors.

"What's taking you so long damn it" Will growled as Eric finally found the zipties he had been looking for.

Suddenly Jamie exploded upward like a firework and bolted for the van doors with the little strength he had left.

"Grab him!"

Jamie thrust his entire body weight into the unlocked doors, causing him to launch out on the pavement in a heap. Jamie hit concrete hard causing a fiery pain to engulf his joints and skin. Jamie let out a strangled hiss as he attempted to sit up. The child peered upward and found himself frozen in momentary shock as he discovered himself staring at the tall winter spirit in the bushes.

The boys locked gazes both seeming just as surprised and relieved to see the other.

Jamie's wide eyes started to fill with tears of joy as Jack continued to stare at him in complete shock and horror.

The interaction seemed to last forever but it had only lasted a matter of single digit seconds.

Jamie let out a yelp as he felt the crushing weight of Eric's hands wrap around his wounded body. Jamie struggled and tried to push them away, but a hand covered his mouth and he was yanked back into the vehicle. Instantly the van sped off as fast as it could go, heading straight for the highway out of Burgess.

Minutes earlier

"Jamie?" "Where are you?" "Jamie you won, you can come out now!"
"JAmlE?"

Jack sighed, the round had been a short one no doubt, with the other kids at least. It didn't take long for Jack to discover Nate behind the stump, or cupcake in the bushes, heck he had found the brothers Rocky and Tommy in under 31 seconds, but surprisingly Jamie was a lot harder to find.

Jack turned to all the searching kids and spotted Tommy and Rocky whose he quickly floated over to," Any sign of him?"

"no" Rocky groaned.

Jack gave a puzzled expression," You sure you saw him around here?"

Quickly Tommy stood up nodding almost immediately," Yeah, of course, we're sure... we saw Jamie run right past cup cake."

Jack turned to the strong-built girl for approval and she nodded just as fast.

Jack bit his lip. At first, this big search was sort of amusing in a way, Jack had had a hard time believing that Jamie was hiding so well from him. For a while it seemed like a fun challenge to find his elusive believer, with a whole herd of other kids behind him, but as the time passed Jack felt himself start to get worried.

Partly since he had arranged something this afternoon for the shaken boy, Jack had wondered if a little visit from the guardians might help cheer Jamie up, and make him feel a little safer for the upcoming school days ahead. The other guardians were supposed to show up fairly soon at the park to meet both him and Jamie, along with the rest of his friends.

Time was ticking faster than Jack expected.

Soon all of Jamie's friends got up from their searches and walked up expectantly to the eldest member of their group, who didn't seem to notice at first. When the teen looked up he found himself surrounded by confused children all staring at him with dependent big eyes, all asking the silent question...

"what now...?"

Jack sighed and rubbed the back of his head," you guys go search over there," Jack gestured towards the right of the park with his frosty staff," I'll look by the hill."

All the kids nodded and quickly rushed off while Jack flew off towards the small tree-filled slope, his eyes clouded with worry.

As the frosty spirit began to graze the budded trees, he felt his worry and concern grow. Jamie was good at hiding, but not this good. Whenever the 2 of them played it together it was always a charming challenge for the both of them, each one of them liked to leap out at the other from their hiding spots and scare the other playmate, oftentimes that's how Jack found Jamie. So it seemed really weird after all that searching that he hadn't been found yet.

Jack stopped flying and just hung in midair, his eagle-like eyes had spotted something. In a swift landing the boy fell next to a colorful cloth and as Jack inspected it closely noticed it was Jamie's red scarf, the one that North had given him. Softly Jack clutched its soft texture and stared down at it peculiarly.

"He loves this scarf," Jack thought to himself confused,"why is it out here?"

A little frustrated and confused, Jack called the young boy's name.

The teen waited a moment but didn't hear anything.

Shifting his gaze from the lonely cloth, Jack noticed something else that was a little weird, the bushes down the hill seemed sort of... beaten up.

With a curious expression, Jack pressed on, sliding down the hill like he was surfing in slow motion.

As Jack stumbled to a stop he came to the bottom of the tree-filled bank, his cautious eyes searching for the young boy and noticing he was at a side road. That's when Jack looked up and his eyes narrowed in slight astonishment. Right across the small road was a bright red van, which seemed to be shaking slightly. Jack gave the van a critical look and tilted his head curiously.

"that's odd..."

The teen stared at the sight for a moment, clinging to his staff readily.

Suddenly the two van doors flew open and the missing Jamie fell out onto the pavement below breathing heavily.

Jack's amazed eyes shot wide open in shock with his mouth agape, all his limbs frozen in surprise.

More than a couple of questions flooded his head.

Jamie's shaking form peered upward and both of them locked eyes.

Jack was mortified to see the faint drips of blood running down the teary-eyed face of the missing boy, his face pleading for help.

Seconds passed, Jack was about to race towards the boy and pull him up and take him away back to the park, when like a flash of dark light the young boy attempted to get up but was grabbed from behind by two large rough hands, one of them quickly covering his mouth. Jamie's eyes grew and he let out a strangled yelp before being yanked back into the cruel van, like a dog on a leash.

It had gone so fast, that Jack didn't have the time to react.

In about a millisecond the van went in full gear, racing off the side road at full speed, leading into one of the town's main roads, clearly going for the highway.

Jack stared in disbelief and panic, his breath racing before he let out a scream that was as loud and pain-filled as the time he had seen Pitch kill Sandy in front of him," JAMIE!"

With That Jack instantly flew upward and chased after the devil-colored automobile holding his best friend prisoner, going faster than he ever had before. As Jack bolted away with his long legs spinning wildly, Jack dropped something red from his hoodie pocket that slowly drifted down in the breeze onto the white snow that was once beneath him.

"I'M COMING JAMIE!" Jack cried hastily, flying off, leaving Jamie's little scarf to wave bye to them both in the soft wind.

Jack was speeding like a violent blue bullet down the little town's streets, following the van like it was his own life that depended on it. The terrified teen swerved along with the car, his eyes watering from the speed of the wind as the hectic driver kept speeding through traffic lights and narrowly missing other cars. After a split-second decision, Jack whipped out his staff and splashed ice down at the road right in front of the van, making it swerve at its high speed and making its tires squeal. In its faint few seconds of slowing down, the frantic spirit shot down towards the window of the van, siding up beside it like it was some sort of horse race. Jack frantically peered into the tinted glass and saw something that made his stomach nearly puke.

There was Jamie on the stone cold floor of the van, shiny tears that could be seen by the faint light of the sun, running down his terrified face, as this bulky man was holding his squirming little figure down. At the driver's seat was a younger-looking man covered in acne and wearing a dark hoodie, yelling something that could faintly be heard. While a more well-built blond man held the young boy down, pinning

his arms to his sides, and began to adjust zip ties around Jamie's wrists..

Jack could feel a few tears slide down his hysterical expression.

"JAMIE!" Jack screamed his heart nearly giving way, "I'M HERE!"

The young boy must have heard his voice as he frantically twisted and turned under his captor's heavyweight but as he flipped himself on one side, his eyes widened in recognition as he spotted the speeding winter spirit chasing him from the window.

"JACK!" Jamie faintly screamed attempting to pull towards him but was soon grabbed and forced to stay still as the slightly curly-haired man pressed down on the child, forcing his body to sit on top of the young boy's form.

"NO!" Jack screamed before slamming into the van's side and sending a large amount of ice right in the path of the speeding machine. the moment the jet black tires hit the slippery see-through sheet the van made a massive screech that rattled Jack's white teeth, the van made a violent swerve, throwing Jamie and his captor in opposite directions at the metal walls of the van, making Jamie hit the far side of the van heavily, a little blood dripping from his nose.

Jack felt his heart being stabbed by the invisible knife of guilt but quickly regained himself noticing Jamie's temporary freedom.

Glancing around frantically the flying spirit swerved along with the out-of-control van, searching for any opening or possible latch of escape, his heart beating with terror.

That's when Jack noticed the van doors jingling softly at him like an urgent warning bell, Jack quickly made up his mind. Taking a chance Jack flew slightly backward, shoving his nimble fingers into the crevasse of the two red doors, and began to forcibly pull. Shutting his eyes and letting out a cry the teenage boy yanked and yanked slowly opening up a small gap between the 2 steel doors.

"Jack!"

Jack heard the now more audible yell of his friend, his smaller hands trying to push down the large latch.

With a strangled sigh the teen reassured him," DON'T WORRY JAMIE, I'M ALMOST..."

Jack didn't even see the blue car coming, with all its lumber sticking far above the windshield

All he felt was the feeling of his shoulder being crushed under a large amount of weight, heavily shoving his floating body backward into the lumber of wood strapped onto the blue truck behind him, hitting his white-haired head on the large timber. Jack grimaced at the sudden pain but was knocked out completely, while his out-of-control body fell into the street ditch close by.

"JACK!" Jamie cried watching his unconscious friend crash into a cold watery ditch, leaving him alone with his two captors.

Jamie began to panic and started to rush at the doors to throw them open, anything to save his wounded friend.

The van continued on as Jamie was yanked from the crack in the van doors before they were shut tight once again.

Frantic

Chapter 3- Frantic

Bunny sighed, rubbing his temple tiredly. "Are the rest of you blokes ready?"

Sandy nodded, giving Bunny a thumbs up.

A cheerful man with a strong Russian accent appeared behind bunny, adjusting his red coat, "You alright Bunny? You sound tired you grumpy Aussie."

The rabbit glared at the mountain of a man, his emerald eyes flickering with annoyance. "Easter is getting closer mate, how am I supposed to get all these bloody eggs ready if I don't stay up late? I'm a one-man team North, unlike you and all your yetis and elves."

"Someone is a salty little rabbit," North murmured in his heavily coated accent.

Bunny glared at the playful man, "Don't push it North, I swear Jack is a bad influence on you."

Sandy smiled and rolled his golden eyes at North who grinned at him playfully.

"Besides, I have to make up for all the believers I lost last year."

Bunny sighed and rubbed his eyes again. "What's that thing humans drink again? Coffee? I could use that right about now.."

A vibrant swish of blue and green shot past the small group, a fairy that resembled something of a bird hovered in mid air anxiously buzzing from left to right without consciously meaning too. Upon her sudden presence, Bunny became much more alert, his ears shooting

upward as he struggled to stand up, his cheeks under his fur becoming a slight pink.

The feathered fairy gave an anxious smile," Sorry I'm late guys, lots of teeth today, I was running a little behind schedule."

"When isn't there lots of teeth?" Santa grinned.

Bunny smiled," It's okay tooth, you're just on time."

The Fairy grinned her violet eyes sparkling,"I can't wait to see those kids again, it's been a little while."

"It kinda has," Bunny sighed, rubbing his head.

Tooth's eyes shifted from their bright positive sparkles, to more concerned as she fluttered nervously,"Poor Jamie, little thing could use a visit after everything he's been through." The fairy's motherly tone made the rabbit smile, adjusting his boomerangs on his belt.

"Don't worry tooth, Jamie's a strong kid, besides Jack's been protect'in him like a damn hawk the past while. He's gonna be fine."

Tooth giggled,"how could I forget."

North and Sandy smirked at each other, watching the rabbit grin at the colorful fairy.

With a sigh and a quick clap North got everyone's attention,"Alright everyone, globe time." Before Bunny could argue, the great Santa whispered the name of the park into his globe causing a massive vortex to explode before him.

"God I hate this thing," Bunny mumbled, making tooth giggle.

Meanwhile

Rocky's face was scrunched as he gazed up into the sky searching for any sign of their eldest friend. Nothing but an empty blue sky.

"No, he's not up there." Rocky sighed

"What the hell Jack? Where you?!" Rocky's twin brother moaned frustratedly, "those two better not be pulling a prank."

The red-haired Tina got up from the bushes, her wise face painted with concern. "Tommy I really don't think this is a joke, did you see how worried Jack looked? I've NEVER seen him look like that."

"I know, but where are they? This park isn't that big, Jamie doesn't have that many hiding spots."

Nate looked concerned and let out a shaky sigh, "You don't think Lucas, Liam, or Rose ran into him ..do you guys?"

Rocky shook his head feeling his heart thump aggressively in his chest, "I..feel like if he did we would have found Jamie by now."

Nate began to look pale, 'wait so you're suggesting something worse happened?"

"Jesus guys stop! I'm already freaked out as it is. Let's not assume the worst, maybe they're just stuck or something." Tommy blurted, looking both annoyed and scared.

"That doesn't even make any sense, what do you mean by stuck?" Cupcake snarled.

Rocky bit his lip, his brown eyes scanning the sky for any sign of his friends, the sound of his heartbeat gradually starting to drive him crazy.

"He said he was checking out the hill right? My brain isn't just playing tricks on me?" Tommy asked, his usually sarcastic and playful voice becoming more and more frightened.

The group of children walked along gradually, a sense of dread filling the air as they got closer to the thorn bush hill.

"Yeah Jack said he was looking here," Tina responded peering down into the thorny bush side," looks like Jamie might have been here too."

"How can you tell?" cupcake questioned.

"The bushes look kinda messed up, it's like he fell."

"I'm glad Sophie isn't with us right now." Nate sighed.

As his friends continued to converse, Rocky's eyes slit as he noticed something through the bushes and the shade of the trees. Without hesitation, the boy slid down the slope of beaten thorns, his eyes focused on the tinge of red he saw in the snow.

"Rocky what the hell!?" Tommy called from the top of the slope,"I swear if you go missing next.."

Rocky came to a steady stop, dusting himself off as he wandered closer to the road, now able to make out a familiar piece of clothing. The boy's eyes widened and he raced to the small snowdrift collecting the scarf in his hands.

"Guys get down here!" Rocky called as he turned his attention back to the lonely scarf.

Eventually, the sound of numerous footsteps could be heard as one by one Tommy, Cupcake, Tina and Nate joined Rocky by the side of the road.

"Will you please talk more to us asshole before you run off like that," Tommy grumbled.

Rocky ignored the remark and turned to hold Jamie's scarf towards the small group of children, making all their eyes widen in surprise and anxiety.

"That's Jamie's" Tina stated in awe, grasping it from Rocky.

"What is it doing all the way out here?" Nate asked curiously.

"I don't know. Why are they missing at all?" Tommy sighed, annoyed.

Rocky's stern eyes started to become wider with anxiety as the adrenaline began to leave his body and the reality of the situation became more sinister.

Towards the side of the road, Rocky had noticed the burn marks of a car that had been speeding its tires on the pavement, almost in a rushed sort of fashion like the people driving wanted to leave as fast as possible.

"Guys I think we should call the police."

The other children whipped around wide eyed.

"Rocky what's gotten into you?" Tommy mumbled the fear in his voice more apparent.

Rocky pointed out the tire tracks, "I think something bad happened to Jamie, and Jack is trying to save him from whatever it is. Why else would Jack take off without saying anything?"

Rocky's eyes began to burn with salty tears but he quickly rubbed them away.

Tommy looked terrified seeing his tougher twin start to break down in front of him.

Nate quickly pulled out his cell phone and began to dial 911, but Tina stopped him at the last second.

"Wait guys, are we sure?" her green eyes glanced frantically at everyone in the small group, "What if they're somewhere close by and are just taking a while to get back?"

Cupcake began to look angry and stomped up to Tina, tears in her brown eyes, "Tina shut up, this is all your fault they're missing."

Tina looked taken aback and stared at the tall girl in disbelief, "How is this my fault?"

"You were the one to suggest manhunt! We should have played something where we stayed together as a group! We all know that Jamie is being picked on at school when he's alone! If you hadn't suggested Manhunt we'd be fine and no one would be missing!"

Tina's eyes started to sparkle with tears.

"Cupcake that's enough, it's no one's fault." Nate said quickly, shielding Tina and putting an arm around her shoulder.

Cupcake let out a frustrated growl.

"Please guys let's not fight right now." Tommy begged softly.

The small group were silent for a minute before the sound of a vortex-like wind exploded in the woods behind them, making the children jump in surprise.

Everyone gazed at the sudden light shielding their eyes as they did. Within seconds 4 figures stepped out of the glowing vortex, and the swirling wind dissipated.

"Damnit North you picked the thorn bushes again!" A cranky Australian shouted to the jolly Russian man.

"How was I supposed to know we'd pop up vere?"

All the children looked at each other before sprinting up to the figures.

"Bunny! North!" Rocky yelled, waving his hand at them as he continued to run forward with the rest of the group.

The 6ft 1 rabbit peered through the bushes and his emerald eyes widened in surprise, tapping the great Santa's shoulder.

"Crikey, that was easy to find them."

Tooth's head bobbed up next to bunny suddenly, her closeness causing bunny's heartbeat to quicken and the fur under his cheeks to turn pale pink.

"They seem kind of upset guys." Tooth said nervously, her violet motherly eyes sparked with concern.

Sandy floated beside them, nodding in agreement as they stepped out of the bushes.

Bunny quickly knelt down to one knee as Rocky plowed forward to him looking rather out of breath. The rabbit's ears lowered as he peered at the anxious boy.

"Ey, what's the matter mate?"

"We don't know..." Tommy responded breathlessly behind the others.

The rabbit's ears perked in confusion.

"Jamie went missing, we can't find him anywhere, so Jack went looking for him, and now he's missing too." Tina quickly stated.

Bunny's eyes went wide and taken aback, the fur on his neck starting to rise.

"What do you mean Jamie went miss'in?"

Rocky gazed up at the guardian of hope, the child's eyes were filled with a sense of action and seriousness while being clouded with adrenaline and anxiety.

Rocky began to explain the situation to the guardians, once he was finished he pulled out a red scarf that North instantly recognized.

Bunny's eyes furrowed, "that's really odd, especially for Frost."

"I've never seen Jack look so worried." Tina mentioned, making the guardians turn in her direction," it's not like him to just run off on us like that."

"That's not everything," Rocky mentioned darkly, his eyes gazing at the ground.

Bunny peered at the boy, his furry muscles tensing.

Rocky pointed towards the road at the rubber tire tracks that were burned into the pavement. "I can't prove it but those look fresh, I think it's related to whatever happened to both of them."

Tommy shoved his brother, a frown deepened on his face," dude, stop making this into a bigger deal than it is. You watch way too many serial killer documentaries."

Rocky glared at his twin and was about to say something when Bunny quickly stood up.

The group of children gazed at the guardians expectantly, going silent as Bunny seemed to freeze.

The jackrabbit was absolutely sure something was not right, his thoughts raced with the possibilities of what had occurred at this very spot by the road. There was no way in hell Jack would ever leave these kids high and dry like this, unless it involved something exceedingly dangerous, especially if it involved Jamie.

The rabbit had been meaning to talk with Jack for a little while now about his friendship with the curious boy. Bunny agreed Jamie was a sweet kid, but it was odd how attached Jack had become to the child. It seemed like the teen was constantly trying to look after the boy like they were siblings or something, which made bunny a little concerned. It wasn't like Jack was being creepy, just very protective. Especially since Jamie had started to become a target for bullies at school. Bunny was absolutely furious with Jack for manipulating the weather as much as he had the days before spring break, he would

have chewed the young spirit out more if he hadn't seen the bruises and marks that Jamie had gained at school. This meetup Jack had asked them to do was honestly a good idea, especially after the argument he and Jack had about his recent storms.

Tina's sudden announcement caught everyone off guard. "I just got a text from mom, she says there was a red van swerving on the roads not far from here, it was making a mess of traffic. She said the police are looking for it."

Instantly Rocky pulled his phone out and dialed 911 while bunny quickly ran towards the road.

"Hello, I'd like to report my friend missing." Rocky said urgently.

North's worried expression soon turned to anger as he grabbed his swords and followed the rabbit, globe in hand.

"Sandy! Tooth! You guys watch these kids! Me and North will follow Jack!"

Sandy nodded and Tooth began to comfort Tina who looked close to tears.

Nate and cupcake traded looks of pure shock as they watched the Russian and the Australian run out of sight.

Meanwhile

A brunette woman sat at the front desk at the vet clinic, her long chestnut hair swept behind her head into a messy ponytail. Despite answering so many phones and greeting so many clients, her mind remained distant, almost in the third person. Her mind kept drifting back to her young son, who was a little strange at the best of times but was a kind and fun-loving child. Sipping back coffee, the woman assured herself that the reason she was feeling ever so worried was because of the bullying her son had been receiving at school and the anxiety he and she were both feeling at the thought of his return.

Despite her assurances to herself, the mother felt her heart jingle in her chest like a tiny warning bell, for an inexplicable reason she knew something was wrong, something wasn't right. To control her anxiety during the quiet morning hours, she continued to sketch in her notebook, doodling characters of her children, her girlfriend, and some of the animal patients she had seen that day.

Her mind wandered to her story board, and the creative children's book ideas that her girlfriend Jane had been encouraging her to finish. Despite her concerns for her son, the young woman began to distract herself, temporarily finding some peace as she doodled a picture of her blond haired daughter, who had recently turned four.

"Meghan Bennett?" came a commanding but gentle voice.

Meghan stood upward quickly, blushing as she hid her sketches under her patient forms," oh hello, I'm sorry I was just filling out something. Welcome to burgess animal hospital sir how can I help..'

Meghan's peppy customer service voice dissolved as she noticed the police officer in front of her. Her eyes widened as she scanned the man up and down, noticing his more solemn posture she began to feel her heart ring in her chest again, remembering her unverified concerns for her son.

"How..What seems to be the problem, officer?" Meghan stuttered.

The officer looked at the woman sadly, his eyes avoiding her gaze making Meghan fidget anxiously.

"I'm sorry to be the one to tell you Mrs Bennett," the man cleared his throat quietly as if to delay himself momentarily from speaking," It's concerning your son, Jamie Bennett."

Meghan's heart stopped as she felt time slow down around her.

"We have strong reason to suspect he has been kidnapped, his friends are being interviewed as we speak."

Meghan's mouth dropped agape, her eyes bulging from her skull as everything dimmed around her. All moisture left her mouth as she stuttered to speak, the inability to communicate following her loss of words.

"W..what?" Was all the woman was able to breathe as she continued to fixate on the police officer's form, everything around her fading from existence as the waves of dread consumed her.

"We would like you to come down to the station as soon as possible, we'd like to have an interview."

Meghan could barely hear the sound of anything, her ears filled with the ringing of shock.

All the mother could do to reply was give a wordless nod to the officer before she struggled to stand upward from her office chair, her thin legs wobbling violently. The rest was a blur, Meghan and the officer explained the situation briefly to her boss before she left with the police officer, her entire body shaking with dread.

Meanwhile within the van

Jamie stifled another whine as the tight zip ties gutted his arms, they were bound so tightly his wrists had started to bleed with each movement the child had made to try and wiggle out of them. Jamie had struggled for a while after first being restrained, desperately pulling and prying with each bolt of pain it carried across his body. Once he had been tied by his wrists and ankles, a gag had been rammed into his screaming mouth, his cries for help silenced to frantic mumbling. Once Eric had stepped away to the front of the van next to Will, Jamie frantically began to struggle but to no avail. The 11 year old would occasionally squirm in his bonds each time he thought he heard something outside the van windows. Despite his hope, there was no sign of the winter spirit. The boy lay on the floor crying quietly, his mind trapped in a maze of frightening thoughts.

He knew Jack was definitely hurt, he had seen him crash and collapse after he was hit by the lumber on that car.

Was he okay?

How badly was he injured?

Was he... dead?

Jamie shuttered to think.

As Jamie's quiet sniffing continued he heard snippets of Eric and Will's conversation upfront, both men were busy chuckling and whispering to the other. The boy strained to hear what they were saying and caught a few words that were being said, something about a campsite and meeting up with someone. It was starting to dawn on Jamie just how real the situation around him was and just how much danger he was really in. He may never see his family ever again, no more hugs from his mom, no more reading to his little sister, no more playing with Abby, his beloved greyhound, no more sleepovers with friends, and no more Jack.

Occasionally Jamie's captors would peer back at him to see what he was doing, whenever they did Jamie would look away and stare at his feet to avoid their gazes.

"Why am I here?" He thought feverishly, "What are they going to do to me?"

Meanwhile

Highway traffic drove aggressively outside the city of Burgess, unaware of the unconscious invisible body that lay in the ditch beside the bustling street. The late morning sun continued to shine brightly in the cloudless blue sky, as if nothing was wrong in the world. A wounded guardian began to stir from his sudden unconsciousness, his eyes weakly opening as he felt the cold sensation of the watery ditch he had collapsed a little over an hour

ago. At first, the winter spirit just lay in the ditch, unable to understand the concept of consciousness or reality. Slowly the spirit attempted to sit up but fell back quickly as a burning sharp stab of pain exploded down his shoulder. Jack let out a pained gasp and held his shoulder for a moment, feeling the burning disappear to pins and needles ache in his arm. Gritting his teeth the immortal 18-year-old opened his eyes, hearing his heartbeat in his ears. Eventually, his train of thought started to become coherent once more, and a flow of steady thoughts and memories began to flood his mind. Within moments Jack's heart stopped as he remembered how he had gotten in the ditch,

The van, those men, Jamie..

Jack let out a gasp and tried to fly upward but let out a hiss as pain rushed through him. Carefully Jack pushed himself upward, shakingly using the gravel in the ditch as a ledge to pull up. The teen's head throbbed with bolts of pain that stung his brain like a nest of angry wasps. Jack tentatively snatched his staff upward, holding his temple with the other hand.

It felt like his head was going to fall off...

Jack gritted his teeth and slowly lifted his head and glanced towards the busy road, watching the ongoing rush of traffic whizz by.

"JACK!"

A loud Australian voice made Jack's eyes widen as he swiftly spun around, momentarily gritting his teeth at his fast movement. Within seconds Jack was greeted by the Easter Bunny and the jolly Santa. North stumbled to a stop in front of the lone winter bringer, completely out of breath. In ordinary circumstances, the teen would have rushed to the guardian's side and helped the elder catch his breath, but Jack could already tell his shoulder was at the very least slashed.

"Jack vwhat.." North coughed and wheezed his large lungs completely out of breath,"are you alright?"

Before the teen could answer a frantic rabbit stood up on his hind legs,concern present on the guardian's face.

"Jack, what is going on? Me and North were just with those kids in the park, are you and Jamie alright?" It was oddly haunting for the teen to see the concern on the rabbit's face when addressing him, in the past, it likely would have made Jack much happier but at this very moment, it barely crossed his frazzled mind.

Jack quickly stumbled closer, the adrenaline rushing in his ears.

"Jamie's in trouble, I saw some men grab him and drive off in a red van, I tried to follow them but I got knocked out."Jack began to feel himself shake, his body vibrating with fear and fury at the same time, remembering the look on Jamie's face when he had first found him. That expression of pure fear and pleading that should never have to cross any child's face.

North's exhausted body began to straighten, his eyes narrowing dangerously as he glared towards the highway. "Vwhich way were they going?"

Jack swiftly pointed his staff towards the speeding traffic," they were heading out of town."

Bunny glared at the traffic, his pupils eyeing the speeding cars, "do you have any idea how long you were out, frost?"

Jack shook his head in frustration,"I don't know..."

The youngest guardian cursed himself under his breath, grimacing slightly as his shoulder signalled another wave of pain to ripple across his appendage.

Seeing the teen grimace out of the corner of his eye, Bunny turned from his staring contest with the highway to the teen.

"What knocked ya out, Jack?" the rabbit asked sternly, stepping closer to the smaller guardian.

Jack blinked, rubbing his head gently, "I was hit by a car with a bunch of lumber sticking over its windshield."

Bunny's eyes widened in surprise, his emerald eyes scanning the un-phased spirit before him, "It must of hit ya hard if it knocked ya out."

Upon hearing the rabbit's comment North turned his gaze to the injured teen, his parental concern for Jack gripping him.

"Jack, where were you wht?"

Jack shrugged and slowly removed his hand from his head, his mind buzzing with worry as precious seconds continued to pass.

"My shoulder and head, but it's not too bad thoug.."

Jack barely finished the sentence before he felt his hoodie being lifted upward by a large hand, exposing the slash that now resided on Jack's right shoulder blade. The spirit's eyes widened and he let out a surprised shout of protest but was quickly stopped by North who held his other shoulder firm.

"Tvhat's nasty," North whispered examining the large slash, "you might need stitches."

Bunny quickly hopped to North's side, his eyes widening at the site of the mark. Jack's pale flesh had been ripped along his shoulder revealing the peach pink inside of his skin. The differing shades of crimson red and pale pink were particularly jarring in the comparison of the young guardian's pale tissues. Despite the ragged form, the

laceration appeared shallow as blood began to cake the outside of the broken flesh.

Jack felt himself becoming impatient as the elder guardians gazed at his tainted shoulder, the pain his arm remained a distant memory as Jamie's whereabouts crept back into his mind. Jack turned to look at the two guardians, pulling away from their tight grasps with a swift movement.

Suddenly, the young guardian's eyes widened as he noticed the round globe shape in North's Jacket pocket.

"You have the globe," Jack blurted, "what are you waiting for, we can use this."

North sighed, shaking his head sadly, "globe can only teleport to places, Jack, not specific people."

Jack's eyes shot to the rabbit, "Bunny, what about your tunnels?"

Bunny stuttered for a moment like he wanted to ask something first. "It's complicated," the rabbit sighed, "it can only teleport to guardians and places."

Jack's eyes remained wide and wild as he swiftly stood up, "we can use the wind then, it can take me to where Jamie is if I ask it too."

North's eyes widened, his saddened expression from prior lifting, "really?"

Jack nodded his head frantically, ignoring the nasty pain that continued to burn in his temple. "Yeah, it's not completely accurate, but the wind can definitely take me to the area he's in."

"Hold your horses mate," the rabbit said swiftly, "you're injured, remember?"

Jack turned to the stern rabbit impatiently, "I'm okay, it's just a scrap, I've taken worse."

North stepped forward giving Jack an intimidating 'do what I say expression' before grabbing the teen's hand. "Bunny is right, Jack, you shouldn't be flying in this condition." North's stern blue eyes glowed protectively as he gripped the lanky teenager's arm in his massive hand.

Jack's eyes darted upward to find the intimidating expression of North towering down upon him, his glaring eyes sparked with an expression of seriousness that the teen had never seen before. Despite the flame of anxiety that began to glow in his belly, Jack's eyes narrowed as he pulled away from North.

The teenager glared at the giant, "you just said that neither of you can find Jamie nearly as fast as I can, you need me regardless if I'm injured or not."

North's firm expression remained trained on the teenager, his fist bawled.

The rabbit beside the Russian man glared at the teen fretfully, his lips curled into a scowl.

"We will find him on our own, we just.."

"It will take too long," Jack interrupted, "he's a missing kid, the first few hours are crucial."

Jack held his fiery gaze as he continued, "at the speed that van was going it won't be long till they're out of town, I have a better way of getting to him than anyone searching for him right now. I may be injured but I can fly just fine."

With that Jack bolted upward into the air, doing a small flip to prove a point. The spirit gazed down at the two elder guardians, his narrowed eyes beginning to bubble with urgency.

Bunny and North looked at the other, each sharing a similar expression of uncertainty. After a few moments the white-bearded

North gave a nod to the small guardian as Bunny got down on his fours once more.

"Be careful Jack," North muttered cautiously.

"We have no time to waste, we'll follow you from the ground." Bunny muttered darkly.

Jack gave a determined nod rushing up into the sky as he prepared his voice.

"WIND," Jack shouted into the crisp blue sky, "take me to Jamie Bennett!"

With a sudden whiplash of icy wind, Jack was boosted forward, the wind's frantic flows of pressure shooting the teen to Jamie's current destination.

North and Bunny followed the airborne teen, swiftly chasing him from the ground.

Meanwhile

Meghan hardly remembered anything from the past few hours, much less the phone call to her partner. Everything had felt like it was going in slow motion while also being a blur, a blur of horrible introductions and conversations she thought she'd never have to have. If you had asked Meghan yesterday to name one officer from the Burgess police station, she would have drawn a blank, today Meghan knew most of their names. After the interview police assured the young woman her son would be found quickly, and that they would be in touch. Despite their assurances, Megan had given her girlfriend a call to explain the present circumstances before she had gone searching around the highway herself, looking for any sign of this red van. A pattern of horrible thoughts continued to circulate in the woman's mind as she started to drive back to her suburban home. Meghan was so distracted by her own thoughts that she had driven past her driveway. Barely reacting to her mistake, Meghan

shifted gears and twisted the steering wheel until she found herself back in her residence. Gazing at the chipped paint on her front yard fence, Meghan pondered the years she had watched her creative son grow and mature. Walking towards the door Meghan's feet weighed much more than before, her mind pondered how she had even driven home, unable to remember her 20 minute commute. Suddenly the door opened and Meghan found herself swiftly entangled into the arms of a taller slim built woman. Her face remained pressed against the woman's shoulder, her eyes darting from the hundreds of freckles that dotted the familiar limb. Unconsciously Meghan discovered her wobbling legs had started to bend forcing her shaking body to slip to the floor slowly. Despite the downward force, her partner followed until they both collapsed to the frame of the door. Megan felt her body being pressed deeper into the woman's arms, a strange vibration emitting from the taller female. The unusual feeling of her girlfriend's tears awakened part of Meghan's senses as she found herself sobbing in the strong embrace, uncontrollably so.

A familiar voice echoed from the recesses of her mind, a concerned high pitched vocal communication caused Meghan to cry more.

"Is mommy okay?"

A nervous 4 year old had suddenly appeared, almost by thin air, clutching a familiar stuffed rabbit in her hands.

Meghan felt herself shake, furiously she fought herself.

"Look at your daughter you stupid bitch.." she thought to herself.

After a few moments she gained the sliver of courage to peer upward, her heart racing in her chest.

Meghan found herself staring at her tangled haired daughter, her nervous green eyes locked onto her own, a naive confusion spreading across her round face.

"Where's Jamie?" She asked innocently, clutching her brother's gray stuffed rabbit to her chest.

Hearing the question, Meghan found herself sobbing, despite her inner voice's screaming.

"What are you doing you idiot, don't scare her."

A tender palm caused Miss Bennett to peer upward from her tears as she locked eyes with the teary ivy green irises of her shaking partner.

Meghan's sobs subsided with a strange mix of awe and discomfort residing instead, as she marvelled the uncommon tears in Jane's face.

Biting her quivering lip the woman exhaled, pulling the disoriented mother into her strong arms.

"Meghan, please come in. We all need each other right now.."

Save Me

Chapter 4- Save Me

Warning this particular chapter mentions and references sexual assault of a minor, the rest of the story alludes to these topics but this chapter is more graphic.

There is no actual rape in the chapter, but as I stated before it is graphic.

Viewer discretion is advised.

The van was slowing down now as they entered a wooded road. Jamie peered around frightened as he continued to squirm uselessly against the zip ties. There were a number of bumps in the road that caused Jamie to let out groans of agony as his aching head hit against the metal floor repeatedly.

Jamie curled into a ball trying to protect his injured temple.

The 11 year old watched in pure terror as the the pine and maple trees began to cloud the windows leaving little streaks of light to shine in from the windows.

Suddenly the van came to a complete stop.

Jamie let out another pained gasp as his wounded body bumped against the floor.

"Were here" whispered Will as he opened the driver side door.

Eric quickly followed, shutting his door.

Jamie waited with baited breath as he heard the sounds of Eric and Will walking away, chuckling and talking quietly.

Once he was sure they were gone, Jamie squirmed much more violently in his restraints, each kick and pull earning him nothing but sharp pains in return. Minutes passed like hours as Jamie made no progress in his predicament, with a sob of terror the child put his head down in defeat.

Tears streamed from rich brown eyes, pooling under the child's cheek while he lay on his side. More than anything in the world, Jamie wanted Jack to appear in front of him and take him to the warmth and safety of his home.

Jamie lay on the floor for a while longer before he heard the sound of the van doors creaking open, the sun filling the metal room.

Jamie cringed and shut his eyes, shivering in terror.

"Holy shit you guys actually did it." A new voice registered in Jamie's brain as he peered through his rich brown locks. Just outside the van stood Eric and Will, between them was a young man with short red hair wearing a dark brown sweatshirt that was fairly clean. The child's teary eyes pleaded for help but the more he observed the new presence the more uncomfortable he felt. The way the red-haired man's face seemed to glow at the sight of the captured boy made Jamie's stomach flip. Not only was the man's predatory grin alarming, but his eyes seemed to almost slit with intensity.

Jamie let out a frightened whine.

"He looks good, grab the blanket already will you?"

Will sighed and nodded, finishing off his cigarette before walking away briefly.

Jamie could feel the man's eyes staring at him as he shut his eyes and looked away attempting to hide his face.

He let out a strangled gasp as he felt himself being picked up by Eric who roughly grasped him around his legs and back. Jamie started to

struggle but was only clenched more by Eric, his nails pricing the child's skin purposely.

Jamie let out a tiny cry of pain as Will came back with a thick blanket in hand. Jamie watched in horror as the red-haired man spread out the thick cloth over the cold floor.

Eric then tossed Jamie on the blanket, Jamie letting out a cry of surprise and pain.

All 3 men hopped inside the back of the large van, neglecting to shut the door as they did.

Jamie frantically struggled as he maneuvered his body in a worm-like fashion, his wide eyes flashing to all the adults in the crowded area.

"Little fucker neatly broke my nose Keith," Eric said holding an ice pack to his face, "what do we do to him?"

The red-haired man now known as Keith slid closer to Jamie, a sinister smile spreading across his cheeks. Jamie watched in frozen terror as the man leaned forward and began to touch his face, feeling his hair and locking eyes with the terrified boy.

"Sounds like someone is a naughty boy." Keith chimed, his rodent eyes glimmering.

Will sat to the side pulling out a number of items, including a hammer and a knife.

"Fuck I've always wanted to do this," Will whispered, a twisted smile forming on his face.

Jamie's eyes clouded with fearful tears as he gazed at the man in front of him, Keith inched his hands closer to the trembling boy's face making Jamie pull back slightly, shutting his eyes.

The man grabbed Jamie's chin firmly, causing the boy to whine in protest through his gag. Keith slowly removed the yellow cloth from the boy's mouth, making Jamie's eyes widen in shock as he felt the foul-tasting material being removed.

Jamie let out a few shaken breaths that vibrated through his body like an electrical current. Tears continued to fill the traumatized boy's eyes as he slowly looked up at the eager-looking man.

Keith grinned a horrible smile as he dug his hand under the child's chin, forcing Jamie to continually hold his gaze.

The child quivered, his dry lips trembling as he sobbed.

"Please don't kill me," the child begged, "I don't want to die..."

There was a pause as Keith stared at the crying Jamie, his eyes surprised by the boy's first sentence to him. A slow smile began to glide across Keith's face.

"He is young isn't he?" Keith chuckled.

Eric shrugged, "I'm guessing he still believes in Santa and shit."

Keith smirked and gazed at the 11-year-old, "What's your name?"

Jamie let out a tiny sob before he answered. "J..ja..Jamie."

"Tell you what Jamie, do exactly as we say and you'll live."

Jamie gulped his eyes scanning the area he was trapped in, his big innocent brown eyes lost in terror as he noticed the hammer and knife Will had pulled out previously.

"What are you going to do to me?" Jamie whimpered, his voice cracking with tears.

Will grinned, "don't worry kid, this is just if you misbehave for this next part." The teenager's eyes gleamed.

Keith nodded in agreement and turned to Jamie smirking, "alright Jamie we're going to cut your legs free, but don't get any ideas."

Jamie sniffed and nodded.

Keith backed away and Will came closer, knife in hand he sliced through the zip tie making Jamie gasp in surprise. The boy gazed at his free feet, letting out rushed breaths as he watched Will put the knife away.

Keith then came back into view smiling sadistically. "Okay Jamie, I want you to stay still for this next part, will you do that for me?"

Jamie let out a sob, his shaking figure covered in sweat and tears. The child felt himself slip into a state of pure shock, his lips unable to move and provide an answer. The lad was silent, his breath caught in the back of his throat. Suddenly he was slapped across the face in one sharp violent move that caused Jamie to let out a screech of pain and shock.

"He asked you a question, you damn runt." Will grinned maniacally.

Jamie started to cry again, his sides heaving, still unable to say anything coherent through his terrified breaths. Will slapped the boy again, his head hitting the floor causing Jamie to yelp in agony.

"You little shit."

Jamie finally began to form words with his weeping mouth, "yes." The simple word was all he could stutter through his quivering lips.

Keith smiled and put a hand through the child's hair, "that's better."

Jamie whimpered and cringed from the man's touch, refusing to look up.

Keith turned from Jamie and looked at his accomplices.

"NO one is around here right?"

Eric nodded, "nobody was following us, this place is completely deserted. We're the only ones here."

Keith turned to Eric who was pulling out his camera app on his phone, Eric nodded in acknowledgement.

"Good," Keith responded almost in a husky breath, "I want to enjoy this."

A slightly more confused expression fell across Jamie's young innocent face, but before he could ask any questions he was pulled into Keith's awaiting lap with a panicked yelp, fear rising through his veins. The boy found himself leaning against the man's abdomen as hot heavy breaths seemed to rush out of the confused child. Struggling Jamie attempted to squirm away but Keith held him fast against his abdomen forcing the child to sit still and lean against his massive chest.

"Remember what we agreed upon before Jamie." The man growled.

At this point, Jamie was crying so much that he was having a hard time breathing. He was so scared, absolutely sure this man was here to kill him. Jamie sobbed and tilted his head downward waiting for the feeling of a knife to slide through his ribs, but to his disoriented mind, he didn't feel a knife, but each time he knelt back on his captors chest, Keith's breathing seemed to become deeper and deeper till it sounded almost like guttural sighs. After a few moments of this, Jamie stopped squirming and sat completely still, that same confused expression from before clinging to his face in its own horrified way. For a couple of long seconds that seemed to last forever Jamie just sat there breathing heavily.

That's when he felt it.

The adult man placed a soft kiss on Jamie's jaw line.

The young child froze, his breath freezing in his throat like ice as the warm feeling of the man's lips left a small mark on his skin, at once,

a thousand mixed emotions filled his head. Shock, fear, terror, but most of all confusion, as he stared wide eyed at the wall in front of him, unable to speak at the man's odd act.

The only person who kissed him was his mother before bed, but even then it was not like that.

Jamie had maybe a few seconds to register what happened before another world of hell crashed onto him, the man started to kiss him all over his cheek, slowly attempting to lead up to the young boy's mouth.

Jamie freaked.

The child let out a scream and struggled with all his strength in the large man's tight grasp, hysterically writing this way and that in a wholehearted attempt to save himself from whatever was going on.

"MOM! HELP ME!" Jamie cried tears flying down his cheeks,"
LEAVE ME ALONE!"

Will grabbed Jamie and threw him to the floor, a sharp snap of excruciating pain flying through Jamie's wrist as it made an awkward slam to the metal floor.

Jamie let out a gasp of agony and tried to collect his breath. Between his breathless gasps, Jamie pleaded with the men around him who no longer had humanity.

Keith shook his head and knelt down next to the boy." You're a beautiful boy Jamie." He sighed kissing the back of the child's neck, making Jamie cry even harder," You were so obedient there for a while."

Jamie shut his eyes and sobbed louder as he felt the man feel inside his shirt.

The child had never been so scared in his life, not even with pitch.

What was this guy doing to him? All he wanted to do was run, for reasons only his instincts could guess.

It felt so wrong.

That's when yet another circle of hell revealed itself, as Jamie's powerful captor began to feel along Jamie's sides till they reached their forbidden destination, the belt around his jeans.

There was a pause before the vulnerable boy felt Keith play with the fake leather strap tight around his waist, and to Jamie's horror, felt it loosening. The boy struggled again screaming out pathetic pleas that came out more as dismayed mumbling that no one could understand, the boy struggled rocking up and down and kicking with all his might, but Keith had placed most of his weight on the child's legs and hips so it didn't really do much. As the boy felt his belt loosen almost completely Jamie screamed again, as loud as he could towards the open van doors.

"HELP!" The child bellowed.

"Scream all you want no one can hear you." Keith hissed

Jamie choked, his throat burning from his bawling as he continued to fight against the older boy's advances.

"Keep on screaming cry baby," Will mocked with a sing-song sort of tone, "it just makes it more entertaining."

Jamie let out another sob and struggled towards the light of the open van doors, his eyes focusing on the dimming afternoon sky.

Eric, who had been filming the attack, paused, noticing the wide open van doors. Squinting and biting his lip, the eldest boy seemed conflicted. After a few moments the man thrust his phone into Will's hands stepping towards the metal doors.

"What the fuck dude, it's Keith's turn first, don't put me on camera duty I go right on after him." The teenager sneered.

Keith rolled his eyes, "I'm just closing the doors you dumbass."

Will snickered, his eyes narrowing, "you're paranoid, no one's out here."

Jamie let out a shriek as he watched the blond haired man grab the latch to both doors, his frenzied body wriggling uselessly against the teenager.

"JACK!" The boy screeched desperately, his lungs exploding within his chest.

The doors slammed shut and locked while Jamie continued to squirm, his gasps for breath becoming more frantic as he was crushed under Keith's weight.

Will smirked at the sobbing boy handing Eric his phone.

"Who the fuck is Jack?" He snorted.

Smirking Eric sat back down and adjusted himself, zooming in on the terrified boy's face. "Whoever he is, he ain't saving you kid."

Jamie sobbed, his heart threatening to burst from his small chest as he gasped for breath between his screams.

"This can't be real, this has to be a dream." Jamie thought feverishly, now unable to see through his tears.

Meanwhile some time earlier

Bunny, North, and Jack continued their search, each covering different ground throughout the highway and dirt roads. North and Bunny used the rabbit's tunnel system, exploring the side streets near the highway. Jack flew above the highway traffic, getting a birds-eye view of the current traffic and some of the nearby hidden

dirt roads. After some time, each party would return to the other and report their progress, after which North and Bunny would let Jack call on the wind once more to take them to a new location.

Jack had been searching yet another road off the highway for a while now, frantically scanning the area for the young child whose life was at stake. With each passing moment, Jack felt more and more panic grow through his veins and cloud his mind with mist, but then again his headache from earlier wasn't really helping. The teen let out another grunt as he clutched his pain-filled upper arm, letting out a sniff of frustration and continued to fly, searching desperately for a red van.

The teen searched and searched passing all colours of cars and all sorts of red vehicles, none of them being the one he was looking for, at this point Jack was running out of ideas. After yet another false alarm Jack let out a hiss of frustration and rose high up into the sky, worry expressed on his pale face. As Jack rose he gazed downward at the traffic below thinking things over, all he had wanted to do was surprise Jamie and get him to see the guardians after a good game of tag with his friends.

Giving a shallow breath Jack prepared to meet up with North and Bunny once more. Flicking his staff, the wild spirit flew to the ground by the side of the road. The winter spirit waited impatiently until a large hole suddenly appeared and both Bunny and North climbed out of it.

"Any luck?" Jack asked instantly, already sensing a negative answer.

North sighed and shook his head begrudgingly.

Bunny said nothing, his eyes distant with thought.

Jack bit his lip and glared at the ground, frustration and anxiety tearing at what little sanity he had left. He had expected the answer he had been given, but he couldn't help but hope against all odds

that his fellow guardians had seen at least something pointing to Jamie's whereabouts.

Sighing, the frustrated teen groaned and flew upward, leaving the other guardians to watch him from below. Jack rose upward, preparing to ask his oldest friend for help once more.

"WIND!" The teen called horsily, "TAKE ME TO JAMIE BENNETT!"

It took the strong breeze seconds to scoop the boy up into its graceful arms and pull him forward, rocketing the teen to his next destination. Bunny and North followed from below, their eyes trained on the flying winter spirit.

Jack was surprised by the strength of the wind this particular time as it snagged him much rougher than before, almost as if the invisible force was as panicked as the teen was. Jack struggled to angle himself, feeling his hoodie being tugged by the wind's invisible hands pulling his lanky form abruptly making many twists and turns in the air, dragging Jack along like a protective mother did with a confused child.

A faint flash of hope ignited in Jack's chest, his diminished optimism all but bursting as he wondered if this time the wind was sure it knew where Jamie was.

It had been frustrating, to say the least, when the wind would lead Jack and his fellow guardians to an area, their hopes high as they would frantically search only to find no sign of Jamie anywhere. Jack had to explain to both North and the agitated Bunny that the wind would take him roughly where Jamie was, but at the speed, the van was going, they could have easily missed it. The wind wasn't always that accurate when you're looking for a person rather than a place, especially since Jamie was likely still trapped in a moving vehicle.

The other times the wind had scooped Jack up in search of the missing Jamie, its usually playful twirls and twists were replaced by crucial speed and acute turns, desperately shooting Jack to the

moving Jamie. This time the wind's tone seemed different, much more forceful and frantic, almost angry as it dragged the teen to a distant wooded area.

Suddenly the wind shot downward earning a surprised yelp from Jack who was then shot towards the opening of a nearby dirt road. With a stern swish, the teen was carefully placed into the still air, the wind ruffled the teen's white hair comfortingly as it left. Jack mumbled a thank you and waited anxiously for North and Bunny to appear, his heart beating in his ears. A couple of minutes passed and the ground opened up once more, Bunny and North quickly bounded out of the dark abyss. Both guardians seemed acutely aware of the change in the situation as each shared a look of frantic excitement.

"Jack, what's going on mate, you were flying way faster." Bunny asked, his eyes wide.

"I don't know for sure, but I think the van stopped." Jack gestured with his staff towards the forked dirt road. "Even if it didn't, it has to be somewhere in this woods."

North took out one of his swords, his eyes now slitted with intense determination. "NO time to waste, let's go."

Bunny nodded, eyeing the worn path. "Let's split up, I'll take the right lane, Jack and North go right."

Jack's eyes narrowed with resoluteness, giving a nod he bounded towards the left part of the forked road, North close on his heels.

"Jack!"

Hearing the Australian, the teen stopped in mid air, turning backward Jack gazed at the rabbit expectantly.

Bunny stared at the teen, his emerald eyes narrowed as he seemed to be studying the twitching winter bringer.

Both held the other's gaze for a few intense moments before Bunny sighed and looked Jack up and down one last time.

"Be careful." The rabbit whispered.

Jack gave a nod before bolting off, his mind now trained on patrolling the dirt road. The guardian of fun began following the path littered with old and new car tracks, his mind buzzing with adrenaline.

North rushed after the teen, his body threading through the bush line of the trees while Jack searched from the air.

As the 18 year old flew this way and that, his troubled mind backtracking to the child who he was searching for, and what terrible things could be happening to him. It was true, just because Jack was the guardian of fun and mischief didn't mean he didn't acknowledge the bad things in the world. After 300 years Jack had seen his share of horrible things, from war, heartbreak, murder hell even child death. There was a long list of things he knew about that he hated, more than anything he wished nobody had to go through those situations.

But the thought of Jamie going through one of these situations...

it just broke his heart.

He had to find him.

Both guardians paused by a nearby area, North peering through the branches of a thorny bush, scanning the path for any sign of a van.

"NO, nothing here."

Jack hissed in frustration, kicking the snow under his feet bitterly before he rose upward to the tops of the trees.

North watched the agitated guardian sadly from the forest floor, sighing the giant waited for the impatient teen to glide downwards, returning to his side. The great Santa exhaled, his face aging seeing the amount of terror and fear present on the youngest guardian's

expression. Softly the man reached a large hand forward comfortably, resting his palm by the teenager's neck. Jack shifted and glanced over to the giant, his eyes downcasted with frustration.

"We will find Jamie, Jack." The Russian stated firmly, a faint reassuring smile spreading across his lips.

"I promise."

Jack peered at the man for a few moments, his anxious eyes calming slightly as he scanned the confident elder. Jack returned the faint smile momentarily before the imitation was replaced by his genuine anxiety once more. The wind had carried a sharp scream to Jack's eager ear canal.

"HELP!"

Jack's heart stopped as he quickly recognized the voice.

"Did you hear that?" Jack hissed enthusiastically.

North paused and lifted his sword forward, standing stock still as he listened intently.

Jack held his frantic breath, his body tense as he waited anxiously.

After a few moments that passed like hours, the wind blew again carrying a sickly familiar cry to Jack's keen ears.

"JACK!"

Jack's pupils shrunk with focus as he bolted into the air, all other thoughts leaving his dejected brain.

"JACK, where are you.."

North's voice trailed off behind the teen as he automatically thrust forward rushing through the trees and sky, following the wispy wind. Within moments the teenager had covered a fair amount of ground,

his mind trained on the dirt road before him. Something about this path seemed to tug Jack forward, pulling him like some sort of invisible leash, it was clear that he was close.

Jack sprinted from one area to another, his heart skipping each time he came across a clear set of tire tracks in the rare patch of snow he passed.

As the teen veered round yet another pine tree, wondering if he should fly any higher he came across the long-awaited sight. Jack froze and nearly fell over in shock, the winter spirit floated there wide-eyed as he came right in front of the very red van he had been looking for, standing still to the side of a small hiking trail. Jack was so relieved he could feel tears welling under his eyes, but he quickly wiped them away, reminding himself that he had to stay calm. Briskly, Jack zipped towards the crimson vehicle, the relief fluttering in his pounding heart soon replaced with horror. Flying closer, Jack began to hear the sound of muffled yelling and screaming becoming louder and louder. Jack's heart started racing as he gained altitude, his previous reminders of trying to stay calm all but leaving his brain.

Jack zipped to the window, his hazy mind frantic to see the missing boy.

What he saw was one of his greatest fears.

When Jack landed his eyes on the scene inside the van, his heart stopped and his entire body froze like frost itself, a burning feeling began to rise its way down the spirit's back.

There was Jamie on the floor of the van crying madly, as this bulky man was kissing him on the back of the neck, making Jamie's screams become louder. The child squirmed and struggled to move his legs to the best of his ability but was crushed under the weight of this pervert who was holding him to the ground. The child had his eyes shut ever so tight as tears began to stream down his burnt red cheeks, begging this monster to let him go.

Jack felt his heart shatter.

While the monster shifted Jack finally caught sight of something that made him want to cry even more, as he noticed the man was trying to remove the belt that was around the child's waist.

Jack could no longer contain his fury.

The teen slammed into the window repeatedly, an unnoticed fiery agony rushing through his shoulder as his painful laceration from prior began to tear deeper. With each violent thrust the window glass began to crack, Jack's enraged emotion caused a formation of sharp swirls of frost to appear on the window, its serrated edges spreading quickly in an unusual pattern.

After the first hard bump, all the men in the van jumped and looked panicked, peering around desperately for the source of the sudden thrust. As the teen thrashed against the van repeatedly he noticed the red haired man had stopped his attack on Jamie and quickly grabbed a yellow cloth forcing it into the struggling boy's mouth. The little boy squirmed in protest but the red haired man smashed his small temple to the floor. Jack's fiery eyes widened in panic before he slammed himself harder against the glass, this time causing a significant snapping sound which resulted in everyone in the van swiftly glancing at the window. A strange expression of surprised terror was present on each of the perpetrator's faces as they gazed at the cracked window, each of them

********Jamie's pov********

A loud thump caused everyone in the van to shift as the metal floor bounced underneath their feet.

"What the fuck was that?" Will asked anxiously, a worried expression replacing his sadistic grin.

Eric stopped recording on his phone and quickly placed the device in his pocket peering around suspiciously. "Everyone stay calm."

Jamie slowly opened his eyes, peering around frantically as he noticed the sudden atmosphere change in the van, flinching slightly as his agonizing wrist began to pulsate with discomfort.

Another large bump made everyone in the van panic, Keith quickly snatched the yellow cloth from before and thrust the gag back into Jamie's mouth. The child let out a cry and struggled but Keith smashed the boy's face to the floor. Jamie let out an agonized wail, his head swimming in pain.

As if to answer for the actions that Jamie had just suffered from, another more harsh bump caused the van to tip.

"What the fuck is that?" Will asked frantically, holding his knife in his hands.

"Is it the police?" Keith asked, his once excited voice falling to a much more wary tone.

"Shit..what do we do?" Will whispered, eyeing the boy under Keith's body.

There was a brief silence before a loud crack could be heard from the van's window. Eric's astonished voice rang out in the cold air.

"What the... guys look."

Jamie breathed in steady shaky breaths continuing to shut his eyes tight, preparing himself to be hit once again, not wanting to look up.

"what the..."

The creatures turned their frantic gazes upward, and slowly Jamie did the same flinching at the sun's rays as he squinted upward.

Then his eyes widened and he let out a small gasp inside his gag.

On the small frost covered van window words were written, curving in an angry threatening ice, to anyone who looked at it they would

guess the ice seemed to glare at a person each time they glanced at it.

Jamie's teary eyes widened, like they had done on that night when he had almost stopped believing in the guardians, the adults seemed to wear similar shocked expressions. The frost clearly stated the following four words.

"LEAVE JAMIE BENNETT ALONE."

The captors all let out panicked gasps as yet another loud thump rocked the van.

"Jack?" Jamie murmured, still practically silenced by the yellow cloth.

The cold letters continued to freeze on the tinted window, becoming more and threatening as each second slid by, that was until the light shone through the ice at a just so angle giving them a hazy red glow.

There was a final violent bump.

That was when the glass broke

Jack exploded into the van, his eyes filled with tears and vengeance, the entire van turned into a blizzard of snow, wind, and ice.

"What the actual fuck is going!?" roared Keith, distracted from his young captive.

Will looked very pale as did Eric who looked around frightfully at the phantom snow storm.

Jamie's eyes shot wide open as he was surrounded by blinding snow and wind, the flurry of snowflakes tickling his face and pressing warmly against his cheek. The child's heartbeat with adrenaline and determination as he used his chance to throw himself out from under Keith, kicking him in the stomach as he did. Keith let out a gasp of pain as Jamie struggled to the side of the van pulling himself to the corner farthest away from the men.

"What the hell, it wasn't storming like this today!" Eric mumbled.

"Open the damn door!" Will screeched, throwing himself at the metal latch.

As the two accomplices pushed the lever down the doors flew wide open and both of them gazed at the sunny evening sky that was quickly covered by a thick swarm of ice and snow. Both men looked at the other in complete terror and awe before Eric watched helplessly as Will was thrown violently against the van door.

****Jack's POV****

For hundreds of years, Jack was not seen or believed in, whenever he tried to interact with any mortal person they would just walk through his ghostly spirit form without notice. This time however the wind was backing up Jack's movements and actions with violent wisps of strength, enough to whip bodies around with its whirlwind-like speed. So when the enraged winter spirit noticed the two men trying to escape, he gripped his staff tighter and threw the crooked stick at the dark haired man as hard as he could. A fiery jett of agony rushed from his slashed shoulder as the injured immortal felt the impact of his staff to Will's face ripple upward to his arm. Will toppled to the ground, Jack lept on top of the teenager, his angry fists grabbing the 18 year old by the collar of his hoodie. Jack glared hatefully into the teenagers acne scarred face, his pale mouth turned into a malicious scowl. The teen twisted in the immortal 18 year-olds grip, terrified and confused by his restricted movement which seemed to be limited by nothing but the swirling storm around him. Jack threw the teen to the ground with a sharp thrust, his teeth gritted so hard he was sure they might crack. All the furious teen could see was red, his vision plastered with the images of Jamie sobbing and cowering on the ground as this sick individual sat there watching, enjoying his sadistic view of the abuse. Jack threw a fast punch into Will's face, causing Will to cry out in pain as he covered his freezing face with his hands. Jack's burning hate fueled his fists again and again as he continued to throw punch after punch into the teen's face.

"You pathetic piece of shit." Jack hissed his eyes red with tears, "don't go near him ever again." The wind threw open the van doors and flung Will out into the dirt below hissing and screeching with fury.

Will gazed up in shock at the van, its metal doors containing the violent storm of snow and ice. Shakily, the teen began to drag himself from the scene, unable to accept the frightening reality he had been thrown into. A few seconds later Eric was thrown out of the van, covered in bruises and slashes from the shards of ice.

Both men stared at each other, sharing the same expression of panicked confusion before they bolted into the woods, looking back occasionally as they ran, watching the storm engulf the red van.

Keith whirled around desperately, panic taking over his brain as he searched in vain for the cause of this sudden paranormal storm. His green eyes shone with pure confusion peering this way that he could barely see in front of his face. As Keith stumbled around stunned, he heard a yelp and peered down to find he had stepped on Jamie's leg.

Without hesitation, Keith scooped the boy up in his arms to transport the child to a more secluded area.

Jamie let out a yelp of terror and shock as he began to struggle in the man's grasp, kicking until Keith let go and let him fall to the ground.

Keith's fiery eyes burned with frustration as he raised his hand to the teary-eyed boy below him, who had already begun to flinch expecting the attack.

Jack's POV

Jack Frost turned around from the first two captors to see this red-haired man raise a hand over the cowering Jamie. The teen wasted no time by charging forward and pushing the red haired man to the

ground screaming furiously as he leaped. The winter spirit sat on top of the man hauling off and punching the man again and again, repetitive blows causing blood to fly.

Keith began gasping for breath letting out shrieks of pain and confusion as the wind fired its punches, slashing his flesh with ice and snow.

It was like Jack was a whole new person, it felt more like he was just witnessing his attack from above in the air, gazing down on another white haired teenager who was sobbing and screaming with rage, giving mighty blows to the large man he had pinned underneath him. The pain that gushed from his sore temple and slashed shoulder no longer was felt.

The teen had completely lost his mind, Jack couldn't even think, all he knew was he wanted to inflict as much pain as possible onto this creature, and let it feel a taste of the kind of terror it had inflicted on his own friend.

"DON'T EVER COME NEAR JAMIE AGAIN!"

Jack kept on beating the man, his mouth wide open as he continued to shriek, eyes glistening with fury as he threw more and more pain-filled punches across the screaming Keith's face.

Jamie stared at the sight in horror from the corner of the van.

Jack let out a scream and snatched Keith's collar, forcing the bruised covered man to look up into the invisible spirit's face.

Jack let out a roar, "TOUCH JAMIE AGAIN, AND I'LL MAKE SURE TO TEAR YOU LIMB FROM LIMB!"

With that, the spirit spit in the man's face and flung him hard against the wall with a heartless thud, echoing across the blizzard-filled walls.

Jack quickly flew to Jamie's side and crouched over him like a tiger defending her cub as he roared at the monster in front of him.

"GET OUT."

The doors flung open and Keith tumbled out. Momentarily the man's frightened eyes peered upward, glancing at the crying child and the snowstorm around him, the endless swirl of snow circling protectively around Jamie.

Then with a terrified look in his eyes, Keith sped off limping for the woods at a speeding pace, abandoning his plan entirely.

Seeing the man go, the wind slammed the van doors shut with a clang, before frost began to seal them shut, so no one could get back in.

Inside Jack breathed heavily, still standing over Jamie defensively holding his staff towards the doors in case the men attempted to come back in.

Slowly the snow and wind began to die down in the cold air, becoming clearer and clearer as Jack's anger started to shift until there were no more snowflakes at all. Jack finally lowered his staff breathing heavily with a determined expression, but then it quickly melted as a much more worried expression flooded the winter spirit's face and he rushed to Jamie's aid. Kneeling down the white haired teen began to check his crying friend over, un-tying the plastic ropes around his wrists.

"It's ok buddy, I'm here now, no one's gonna hurt you..." Jack reassured frantically as he tried to undo the zip ties on Jamie's peach skin, the plastic restraints causing a deeper mark with each second they were there. Jamie sobbed even harder, his cries muffled from the yellow cloth still rammed in his mouth. Quickly Jack reached down and tenderly pulled the cloth from the boy's mouth, allowing Jamie to gasp for breath. The child coughed between cries and began to take in a few shaken breaths, his little sides heaving

heavily. The whimpers from the child caused Jack to work faster with the finicky slabs of plastic. Despite the teen's attempts to loosen the restraints the zipties only tightened causing Jamie to cry out in pain. Jack quickly apologized and frantically glanced around for a better solution to release the boy. The teen quickly grabbed the knife Will had left and swiftly cut the zipties off in a quick flash.

When Jack finally yanked off the terrible plastic restraints, Jamie quickly got up, attempting to pull up his jeans that were now loosely hanging off his waist. Jack quickly grabbed the boy's belt and handed it to the child, Jamie snatched the fake leather artifact and shakily threaded it back around his waistline, cringing slightly as he moved his wrist between loops. Jack helped the child by adjusting his belt and buckling the latch as Jamie's hands were shaking quite badly. After the teen had finished assisting the boy, Jack came face to face with the teary eyed Jamie. Jack and the boy both breathed heavily, the teenager stared at Jamie intently, tears welling in his own eyes, both boys silent for a few moments before Jack finally spoke.

"Jamie... are you hurt..?" The teenager whispered, his voice etched with terror.

Jamie's wide eyes finally unlocked themselves from Jack's apprehensive face, and turned to look at his wrist. Gingerly, the child felt his hand and placed a small amount of pressure on his lower hand. The boy let out a sharp gasp, confirming his suspicions, as he held his sprained wrist to his chest, grimacing heavily.

Jack quickly crawled closer to the injured boy, bowing his head downward to face the child.

"Jamie, can I see your wrist for a moment? I want to help."

The brunette boy peered at him nervously, his eyes tinged red with tears, slowly the boy reached out his injured wrist towards the teenager. Jack cautiously took the boy's palm on his own, his cold hands softly holding the boy's wrist as if Jack was cradling a baby bird. Jack peered down at Jamie's wounded wrist, noting the

inflammation and hot temperature. Jack lifted his gaze back to Jamie.

"I promise this won't hurt, but.. it will be pretty cold at first."

Jamie blinked, his teary eyes full of fear.

Jack sighed, his voice cracking, threatening to burst into tears. The 18 year old bit his lip and lifted his staff carefully, his shaking arms softly tracing Jamie's wrist.

Jamie watched Jack nervously, his body shaking with a mix of fear and cold.

Jack's staff began to swirl a soft line of gentle frost along Jamie's wrist, and an intricate pattern of crisscrossing icy flakes softly began to form on the child's skin.

Jamie flinched initially from the cold, but as the frost began to spread along his wrist, all Jamie could do was gaze in awe. A few moments passed and a soft ring of protective cool frost had encircled the sprained appendage, causing the child to let out a sigh of momentary relief as he no longer felt the fiery pain that had engulfed him prior.

Jack placed his staff to his side once more, his eyes watching the soothing clear swirls of frost twinkle on the boy's wrist.

"That will be gone soon," the teen explained softly, "it won't give you frostbite either."

Jamie didn't answer Jack, instead, his small form began to emit little gasps of breath, his body vibrating with shivers. Jack sat on his knees an inch away from the boy, his usually light and playful face darkened with horror. Jack began to feel a burn in his chest, feeling that horrible question rise in his mind. Part of Jack didn't want to ask the question at all, the thought of Jamie confirming his fears was enough to drive the teen into madness. Despite being fairly sure he

had managed to stop the dreaded action before it actually occurred, the thought of even asking such a question to a child, even more so Jamie, left Jack on the verge of collapse. The teen's voice squeaked slightly as he spoke.

"Jamie?" Jack whispered.

The boy slowly looked up, his eyes full of tears and his face dotted with bruises and blood from his nose, a horrified look in his eyes.

Jack felt a tear slide down his own cheek, "...th..they..They didn't actually..?"

Jamie's eyes once again filled with salty discharge and he leaped into Jack's arms sobbing hysterically into the teen's chest.

The 18-year-old stared blankly at the ceiling for a minute, the entire situation sinking into his clouded mind, before he quickly wrapped his arms around Jamie protectively and buried his face into the boy's shoulder.

The child continued to bawl, pressing his little face deeper and deeper into Jack's frosted blue hoodie, making him shiver even more to the added temperature in the van but not caring at all to any extent. Jack sniffed and softly caressed the child's hair whispering any soothing thing he could think of, "It's ok, I'm right here... no one can hurt you now. I'm not leaving you... It's ok."

Jamie's muffled cries continued for a long time, each of his sobs making him hiccup painfully through his skinny body, his shivering becoming more violent with each passing minute. After a while all Jack could do was just apologize as he attempted to stifle his own sobs, "Jamie... I'm so sorry... I'm so... sorry. This is all my fault, I'm so sorry..."

Jamie never said a word and just kept on crying. Jack soon felt himself doing the same, both just held on to each other and stayed like that for what seemed like forever.

Neither boy loosened their grip on the other.

Suddenly Jack's alert ears detected voices outside, seeming to be shouting orders with the faint fuzz of walkie talkies.

Instinctively Jack gripped Jamie tighter and began to stand upward, however the moment he did so he felt his aching head and shoulder explode, his exertion from earlier catching up with him. Jack nearly fell over from the amount of pain that had erupted in his skull, bolts of agony thundering throughout his head and moving about his body. Jack fought to stand up straight, his lanky body trembling. Jamie let out a quiet cry as he felt his rescuer move slightly away from him, despite his pain the teen knelt back down and whispered more reassurances to the young boy, carefully scratching his hair as he did.

Jamie whimpered.

Jack then placed his face on the side of Jamie's head, holding him as close as he could, promising that he wouldn't let his captors come back.

That's when the van doors burst open and two people in blue uniforms burst through, guns pointed right at Jamie, Jack clenched his staff.

"SECURE THE AREA!" shouted the blond-haired police officer clearly yelling to his friends outside. The brown-haired woman with a golden name tag that glinted the name "Starling" spun this way and that, pointing her gun at any suspected shadow of the captors. While his fellow officer was doing that, the blond man turned to Jamie, who seemed to be alone (to his knowledge) on his knees, sobbing uncontrollably with bloody rings on his wrists.

Jack felt relief for a few moments, his protective posture loosening at the sight of the police.

"Things are going to be easier now," Jack thought to himself as he watched the officers, "it's over now."

Despite his newfound relief, Jack began to feel uncomfortable as the officers began to focus on Jamie. Jack attempted to push his anxiety out of his mind, but his relief began to crumble.

The man put his gun down " is that you Jamie Bennett?" The police officer asked loudly.

Jamie didn't look up.

Jack still held him tight, patting his back and urging him to speak.

The officer nodded in understanding and stepped a little closer, "Here buddy everything gonna be ok."

The man took a few steps closer, each inch closer he came Jamie's quiet crying became louder and louder.

The man didn't slow, "Hey, hey, relax, we're the police."

Jack clutched Jamie tighter and let out a nervous sigh, "it's okay Jamie they won't hurt you. They're here to help."

Jack eyed the cop carefully, noting the man seemed wary and on edge like he was expecting something to pop up. He had a nervous look in his eye that seemed to suggest he wasn't sure what to do in this kind of situation.

The man's uncertainty made Jack tense as he started to question if this guy knew what he was doing and to approach someone as traumatized as Jamie.

"It's just a police officer bud, he's here to take you home," Jack whispered, giving the boy another frantic squeeze.

Jamie tightened his grip, otherwise he did not react to the spirit's comment.

Jack felt himself begin to hyperventilate, the small metal walls becoming more closed in, an exhausting pain screeching through his skull and shoulder.

The man put a hand on the boy's shoulder suddenly causing Jamie to panic in his fragile state, and throw himself away from the officer.

Jack, startled by the man's quick movements and Jamie's frantic thrash, stared wide eyed at the stressful scene. This police officer clearly didn't know what he was doing, and he could feel Jamie's stress going up.

Before Jamie could regain his footing, the police officer grabbed him by the arm and began to restrain him slightly more roughly than he had meant to. Instinctively grabbing Jamie's arm, the man had snatched the boy's injured wrist and was squeezing it tightly.

Jamie let out a shriek of pain causing the officer to panic and pull the boy towards him, yanking on his injured wrist as he did.

"Ow! Stop! You're hurting me!" The boy cried, pained tears flowing down his bruised cheeks.

Jack bolted upward, unable to stand the scene any longer as he grabbed the child and knocked the officer down with a quick swish of his frosted staff. After hearing Jamie's terrified cries all he could see was that horrible scene of the little brunette underneath that red haired monster. The officer let out an unexpected shout as he fell to the ground, while Jack collected the terrified boy in one arm.

The teen leaped out of the van with Jamie gripped tightly to his chest, the pair crash landed in a nearby snowbank a few feet away from the ambulance parked outside. Sensing the rough landing, Jack held Jamie tightly to his chest and shielded the frightened boy from the icy snowbank below, allowing his own body to make a rough collision with the rocky snow mound. Upon impact Jack felt his battered temple strike the hard surface of icy snow, forcing the injured guardian to let out a shout of agony. Jack lay against the icy

surface, his frantic brain fighting his swaying vision as he attempted to sit up. After hearing his friend shout, the frantic Jamie pulled away from the teen's protective embrace and began to desperately inspect the almost unconscious guardian.

"Jack! Are you okay?" The child cried.

In his dazed and flashback induced state Jack found himself unable to focus as everything swayed slightly around him.

"Jamie, it's..ok.."

Jack's voice came out barely above a whisper as Jamie's sobbing form above him became darker.

A couple of ambulance workers spotted Jamie in the snow and began to rush forward, a stretcher in hand.

"Quick grab him!" Starling shouted to the workers, as she helped her partner back to his feet.

Eyes bubbling with tears Jamie began to shake the teen by his hoodie, his attempts to awaken his now unconscious rescuer becoming more futile.

"Jack, wake up! Please!"

Jamie let out a terrified shriek as he felt two adult hands grab him around the shoulders, his traumatized mind reeling Jamie squirmed against the adults.

"Lemme go!" Jamie cried, fighting desperately against the red haired paramedic.

The male paramedic attempted to lead Jamie to the ambulance stretcher but Jamie continued to struggle against the man's firm grasp.

"Let me see Jack, he's hurt!" The boy wailed, fighting frantically to get to the body of the teenaged boy.

"Calm down buddy, we're here to help you." The paramedic said worriedly, peering down at the boy's swollen lower arm.

"He's hurt! He needs help!" Jamie begged.

The male worker gripped Jamie tightly but eventually lost his hold on the boy when Jamie threw himself from the man's grasp and fell to the ground. Quick as a flash Jamie ran to the snow bank and desperately began to shake Jack's body once again.

"Jack please!" The child begged, his voice on the verge of screaming.

"Get me the sedative!" The male paramedic shouted to his partner who was preparing the stretcher.

Jack breathed shallowly as Jamie continued to shake the wounded guardian.

"Please wake up! Jack wake.."

Jamie quickly let out a yelp of surprised terror as he felt a sudden needle being forced into his vein. For a few moments the child fought back and threw himself to the snow, grasping desperately at his neck. Within moments Jamie began to feel tired as his eyesight dimmed and the world began to spin around him. Jamie slowly began to drag himself closer to Jack's still body, his hand turning red from the cold of the snow. Using what little strength he had left, Jamie crawled back to Jack's side, softly tugging on the teenager's sleeve.

"Jack.."

Jamie was unable to fight back as the paramedic tore Jamie from Jack's side and gently collected the boy into his arms.

Jamie watched in exhausted horror as he felt himself being carried away, Jack's unconscious body becoming further from his reach. Tears sprung from the tired boy's eyes as his frantic war against his fluttering eyelids was lost.

"Poor kid." The paramedic sighed carrying the unconscious boy towards the back of the ambulance van.

Jamie was placed down on an awaiting stretcher, an oxygen mask being strapped across his bruised face. After pushing Jamie's stretcher into the back of the van, the paramedic yelled to his partner before hopping alongside the unconscious boy. The van then started to move, sirens blaring as it rushed to the nearest hospital that was a little over an hour away.

As the large vehicle pulled away, Jack's body remained mostly still as the snow around him started to collect a red tinge. The teenager was not laying in the snow long before two furry hands had collected the unconscious spirit into their cream coloured fuzzy chest.

Wounded

Hey, finally updated this chapter as well. Thank you for all the support and helpful comments and suggestions I've been getting, it means the world to me

The reason it took me a while to update this chapter was because I updated the past couple chapters (all of them, 1, 3, and 4) and added some final changes to them. I recommend rereading them if you haven't already

Hope this next chapter meets your expectations. I did my best. Thank you all.

Special thanks to SC-01 Fiction who has been extremely helpful in their suggestions and contributions to the story. Thank you so much for all your help.

Chapter 5 wounded

After helplessly watching Jack bolt from view, North had attempted to follow him on foot, chasing the dot of blue from below. Despite his calls Jack dissipated into the sky, as if robotically hypnotized by the voice he was able to hear. North ran for a short while but came to the obvious conclusion that he was unable to keep up with the teenager.

Cursing under his breath North turned around and began to fight the bracken and bush with his sturdy swords, his worried mind trying to retrace his steps back to the rabbit.

As North bolted forward, he found his usually steady mind focused on mental images of Jack's mutilated shoulder. Minutes passed and North found his lungs gasping for breath as he leaped over yet another log and tripping on another just behind it. North let out another curse, his frantic mind buzzing as he wondered what the missing child's predicament was currently. Letting out a grunt of pain

as a thorn slashed his hand, he found himself back on the original dirt road much to his relief. More confident, North sprang forward, his feet thumping on the ground like thunder as he approached the next twist in the road. North let out a bellow as he fell forward, finding himself in the same uncomfortable position to one he had been a year prior, as he found himself chest to chest and eye to eye with a neurotic rabbit.

"NORTH, Crikey not this again!" The rabbit sneered struggling against the dimension of his burrow hole.

North gasped his breath barely able to catch up with him. "Sorry.."

Bunny furrowed his brow, seeming surprised by the swift apology. "Where's Jack?"

North sighed, "he flew off, that is why I was running back to get you." The Russian stated promptly the anxiety in his voice was more prominent than he would like.

Bunny's eyes narrowed and his ears went downward, "he flew off?"

Suddenly North felt himself plunge into darkness as the rabbit's burrow hole swallowed both him and the rabbit. As quickly as he had disappeared into the darkness, North was spat onto the ground, soon followed by a fuming Rabbit.

"That idiot sprite, what in blazes does he think he's doing!" Shouted the guardian of hope, his fur slightly wirey as he dusted himself off.

North sat upward, "he heard noise, he must have heard Jamie."

"Why does he always do that? This isn't the first time he's pulled this is it?" The rabbit hissed, glaring towards North who had picked himself up.

"That idiot better have hit his head hard or else I'm going to make it worse."

North ignored the comment and turned to the rabbit urgently, "you can find him, right?"

The rabbit gave a frustrated nod, pulling one of his smokey egg grenades from his belt. "Trust me, we'll find that wanker."

Suddenly the rabbit fired the small blue egg he had been holding, targeting the highway nearby. North watched in surprise and confusion as the grenade egg hit the smooth pavement lighting up part of the road with red smoke.

"Bunny, vwhat are.."

The Australian flung another egg to the ground, this time on the dirt road, a billowing mass of blue smoke exploding into the air.

Nearby a car swerved avoiding the colorful smoke that had spread through part of the highway, pulling to the side of the road.

Seeing the driver bunny threw an egg closer to the car, a stream of yellow smoke exploded into the air.

Bunny sighed and began to run up the path before slamming down another egg to create yet another jet of smoke, this time purple.

North gazed at Bunny bewildered wondering if the rabbit had hurt his head like Jack, that was until he heard the man get out of his car.

"Police, yes, I would like to report a.. I think smoke grenades are being used by highway 108, it's by a dirt road, it seems to be coming from the woods."

North quickly bolted into action, following the rabbit as he sped up the path.

"That should get their attention," Bunny shouted before patting the ground with his foot.

A rabbit hole quickly appeared and North swiftly lept inside, shortly followed by bunny. It took a few minutes before each guardian resurfaced, North being spat out to the ground while the large rabbit gracefully hopped over his body.

Standing up quickly North pulled out his weapons while Bunny stood from his 4 paws.

"Jack has to be here somewhere.."the rabbit mumbled darting up the path.

North's eyes widened as he chased after Bunny. "Nearby? vwhat do you mean nearby?"

"My tunnels ain't the most accurate, Mate." The rabbit shouted from behind his shoulder. "Me and Jack ain't as lucky as you to have that precise globe of yours."

The rabbit got back down on his fours, rushing up the path,"but he's gotta be around here, pretty close I'm sure."

North sighed bolting after the rabbit,"slow down vwould you! I've already lost Jack.."

The pair quickly rushed up the path, running for a few minutes until they came to a stop under some nearby trees.

"The police should be here soon," Bunny growled,"hopefully they got my message to come up this way."

North came to a stop and began coughing and heaving, his breath flooding from his burning lungs.

"Crikey North, if I had known you were such an old timer, I would have asked Tooth to come with me instead."

North slowly stood straight, his eyes glaring,"of course, of course you'd want to spend alone time with Tooth."

The rabbit suddenly sprung around his concentrated green eyes now fuming. "Ey, what the hell do you mean by that North."

The rabbit was silent for a moment, his emerald eyes fuming with anger and to North's surprise a faint trace of hurt. Slowly North felt his brief anger subside and he breathed in a sigh.

"I'm sorry Bunny, I didn't mean it, I was just.." North exhaled his features displaying his worry, his youthful face now seeming much older.

"I'm worried for Jack and Jamie.."

North rubbed a his face, "I don't trust Jack saying vhe's fine, I'm sure he's injured more than he thinks he is, and I know he's going to push vhimself."

The anger in the rabbit's eyes remained but he swiftly turned around and sighed, "I'm worried too North, I wish that stupid sprite had waited for you.."

North sighed darkly, "I know he heard Jamie, you know how he is with that boy."

Bunny rolled his eyes and nodded, the two continued forward through the woods searching for the guardian of fun. A number of minutes had passed before Bunny finally heard the noise of police cars rushing up the nearby road. Yelling to North the rabbit galloped forward and followed the ambulance. Upon discovering the red van ahead both guardians stopped and watched in horror as they viewed a paramedic struggle to bring the panicking Jamie towards the safety of the ambulance van.

"Awe no.." Bunny whispered in horror, noticing the blood and bruises dotted on the child's freckled face.

North gazed in shock, his blue eyes locked on the same horrible site.

"He's hurt! He needs help!" Jamie cried, pulling against the man grasping his shoulders.

Bunny's ears pricked, "he has to be talking 'bout Jack."

North's wide eyes scanned the area frantically for the teenager while Bunny gazed in horror at the look of pure panic and fear on the little brunette's face.

Eventually Jamie broke free and shot away from the emergency worker, causing bunny to stiffen as he prepared himself to chase after the boy. Jamie quickly collapsed by a nearby snowbank, revealing the teenage body that was now laying motionless against an icy bank.

Bunny's eyes widen, his fur rising on the back of his neck.

"Oh no.."

North bolted forward, rushing towards the injured guardian and the crying child. Bunny quickly stopped the Russian pushing him back with one strong paw.

"North, wait, let them get Jamie first."

At this point Jamie was bawling and desperately sobbing over Jack, as a paramedic was quietly walking up behind the frantic child. Within seconds Jamie had collapsed and the paramedic was now carrying the injured boy to the stretcher. After a couple minutes the van had started its sirens, North bolted forward but Bunny easily overtook the large guardian coming to Jack's side within seconds. Gently but quickly the large rabbit collected the unconscious guardian into his muscular arms, his wide eyes scanning the teenager's lanky form.

"Bunny, look, he's bleeding." North stuttered quickly, pointing towards the rabbit's chest.

Bunny peered downward and discovered a streak of faint crimson leaking down his fur. With wide eyes the rabbit placed the teenager on his stomach in the snow, while North yanked off the teenager's navy blue hoodie to reveal the now large agitated bleeding gash that was dripping the teen's entire back in blood.

"It was nothing like that before!" Bunny shouted in shock, his wide emerald eyes scanning the jagged bloody ripped skin.

North stared in horror at the sight of Jack's injury, his mouth slightly agape. "Must get him to infirmary."

North swiftly swung the globe downward, causing a large noisy vortex to sprout before the guardians. North then turned to the lanky body of the teen and softly collected him into his strong arms. Bunny grabbed the teenager's stained hoodie and staff, bolting forward into the porthole without a shred of complaint. North peered down at the injured teenager in his arms, noticing the blood that was starting to tinge his white hair. The giant worriedly rushed into the porthole after the guardian of hope.

Once the great Santa had stepped to the other side of the brightly lit tunnel he was quickly greeted by both Tooth and Sandy who were anxiously talking to the solemn Bunny.

"North!" Tooth shouted, fluttering swiftly to the giant's side.

Tooth stopped suddenly as she recognized the unconscious teenager in North's muscular arms. North watched helplessly as the energetic fairy's face drained of colour at the sight of Jack's bloody shoulder. The fairy gazed down at the wounded Jack in horror unable to speak as Sandy swiftly pulled up beside her, his face soon sharing a similar expression.

"He..what happened?" Tooth whispered.

"We don't know.. but we must get him to infirmary quickly." North stated shortly. Turning from the other guardians North handed Jack

to Bunny who swiftly galloped to the infirmary ward and placed the injured teen on the unoccupied hospital bed, being careful not to agitate the spirit's sore shoulder. The rabbit's anxiety dismissed his previous feelings of anger as he impatiently waited for North to return with the medical supplies. While waiting for the embodiment of wonder, Sandy collected Jack's hoodie and rushed to soak the blood out in the nearby sink while Bunny and Tooth tenderly began to position Jack on his stomach, revealing the gash had grown significantly on the back of the teenager's right shoulder. The rabbit's eyes widened seeing the unsightly wound, his brain trying to comprehend what had caused such a mark. A flicker of anger ignited once more in Bunny's chest, his emerald eyes focusing on Jack's nasty wound while his mind kept replaying Jamie's terrified face.

"That looks awful, how was he still able to fly with that?"

Bunny awoke from his thoughts and glared down at the teen," it wasn't like that before, he must've pushed himself."

The fairy sighed, eyeing the amount of blood that seeped from the reopened wound,"oh Jack."

North arrived wearing a clean white shirt while holding a box of medical supplies, quickly he looked over the rest of the teen's body, finding a nasty bump on the back of Jack's head. Carefully tooth and bunny began to wash out the teen's wound, removing splinters and hoodie threads from the oozing opening. With ultimate precision and care North began to stitch Jack's wound closed, only using a few intricate seams. Bunny marvelled at the giant's cautious handy work, watching the craftsman's skillful large hands stitch the large gash with ease. The unconscious Jack flinched a couple times during the short procedure, but otherwise barely reacted. Once the stitches had been placed, North wrapped a soft bandage around the boy's injury. Bunny and Tooth then adjusted the boy to his side, allowing North to examine the teen's injured temple.

"What's a hell of a bump," North whispered placing a large gentle hand through the teen's wispy hair, "no wonder he was disoriented."

"What was he thinking, what was he doing to make those injuries worse?" Bunny muttered, handing North a small ice pack.

North sighed, "I don't vnow, he'll tell us when he wakes up."

Bunny sighed, glancing at the injured teen before hopping over to the sand spirit who was grabbing more bandages for North.

"Sandy," the rabbit addressed the small spirit firmly, "can you go check on Jamie in the hospital? I imagine he's there by now."

Sandy gave a quick salute while summoning his airplane made from dream sand. Handing the rabbit the gauze he had collected, the small guardian slid on his pilot goggles and gave a swift thumbs up, before rocketing out of the nearby window to the Burgess hospital.

Bunny watched the spirit disappear, mindlessly playing with the gauze in his hand. Biting his lip the rabbit found himself once again lost in thought, Jamie still weighing heavy in his thoughts. Gripping the white medical supplies, Bunny rushed back to find North putting away his supplies in his box.

"Still need this?" The rabbit asked, holding the gauze out towards the larger male.

North nodded and took it from the rabbit's hand, before turning back to the teenager who lay on his side.

"He's got a small cut on his head, it's not too bad but it's still bleeding a little."

North gently wrapped the soft material around the teenager's forehead. Bunny scanned over Jack's chest, noticing North had placed the boy in a blank pyjama t-shirt.

"When do ya think he'll wake up?" The rabbit whispered softly.

"Soon, I can't think he'll be out long."

North put a tender hand on Jack's head once more, softly rustling his white hair.

"I'm proud of him, you know." North stated suddenly causing bunny's ears to raise. Peering up from Jack's body, North's eyes held a noble shine as he turned to Bunny.

"Jamie is alive because of him."

Bunny sighed and bit his lip, "if only he didn't do it on his own, like that." The rabbit passed a judgmental glance towards the teen until he heard the sound of Tooth's fluttering wings. Looking behind him the rabbit saw Tooth carrying a large red duvet that had completely blocked her view. The feathered female figure wobbled slightly in the air, adjusting her hold on her thick fabric folds. Bunny quickly got up and stepped towards the struggling fairy, gently placing a paw underneath the blanket, causing Tooth to look towards the guardian of hope.

"Allow me to help." The rabbit said gently. Tooth's anxious face relaxed slightly as she smiled towards the greyish blue pooka.

"Thanks Bunny, I forgot how big these were."

Bunny smiled and took hold of the folds of the blanket, the rabbit stepped forward towards Jack's lanky body unfolding the duvet as he came within a few feet of the injured teenager.

"Hold on," North sighed, "he's a winter spirit big blanket just agitate him."

Tooth blushed and bit her finger nail, "right, sorry, I forgot about that."

Bunny shrugged and put the duvet back down.

"It's okay toothy," North smiled softly, "I know you just want to help."

With a tiny nod of acknowledgement towards Tooth, North pulled out a thin blue blanket and gently spread the soft covering over the

teenager, allowing the spirit's feet to stick out from under the cover.

Bunny peered downward towards the injured teenager resting on his side. Bunny noted the younger guardian seemed to be twitching slightly in his rest, his feet occasionally kicking faintly as if he was somehow running. Scanning the youngest guardian bunny noticed Jack's face was still hardened and firm, lips drawn back into a serious frown as he mumbled nonsensical noises under his deep breathing. A bandage had been wrapped firmly around the back of his head, blood tainting the cream white bandage faintly.

"Let's keep him here for a couple days, until he's healed." Bunny muttered softly.

The other guardians looked at the guardian of hope with expressions of difficult agreement.

"You know he's not going to like that." North whispered darkly.

Bunny's eyes trailed to the crooked staff tooth placed at the side of the room, the intricate patterns of frost glittering faintly in the dark. Bunny sighed heavily, his pupils shrinking with determination.

"Let's keep his staff safe, he can't fly without it, right?"

Tooth's eyes widened and she quickly whipped around to face the rabbit "Bunny, we can't do that."

Bunny turned to look at the colourful guardian of memories, his emerald eyes saddened. "You know he's not going to wait, this is Jack, you know what he's like, first moment he gets he's going to see that kid."

"Bunny, " Tooth whispered, "he's..

"It's only a couple days," Bunny said comfortingly, "they'll both be fine."

Bunny turned to face the unconscious guardian again, his ears flicking with anxiety. "Besides, Jamie needs to rest himself, it might be good for the both of them if they had some time to heal, especially Jamie.

Tooth begrudgingly nodded, her lips pulled back into a faint line as she fiddled with her hands. North remained quiet and didn't say a word.

"Where's sandy?" Tooth asked.

Bunny sighed, "I asked him to check on Jamie."

Tooth peered downward at her dainty hands, "I hope he's okay, poor thing."

North gave a nod and sighed, "he seemed pretty upset, but mostly okay."

Bunny shook his head, his eyes hardening. "He seemed more than just upset."

Tooth turned to the rabbit, her violet eyes blinking in concern.

"Vwhat do you mean by that?" North asked.

Bunny sighed, putting a paw on his forehead, "I don't know, all I know is that kid was more than just 'pretty upset'."

North's eyes furrowed, "he was kidnapped, bunny, course he's upset."

Bunny's eyes remained trained on the cool stone floor, the fur on his back beginning to rise. Slowly the pooka peered upward, his slitted eyes unable to hide the fear on his face.

"It's not just that North, somethin' had to have happened, there has to be more.." The rabbit rubbed his forehead before turning to look at

the unconscious teenager again. "I don't know how Jack got so bloody banged up, but I get the feel' in it connected."

Bunny watched the wounded teen's movements, his emerald spheres cautiously monitoring the winter bringer's deep breathing, noting Jack's twitching in his legs.

"I've never seen a child that scared before." Bunny whispered quietly, finally turning away from Jack to the anticipating facial expressions of the guardians.

Tooth bit her lip anxiously, "you said he had to be sedated, correct?"

North nodded, "the people couldn't bring him in the ambulance before, he was too focused on Jack."

Bunny huffed angrily and sat down on a nearby chair, "I wonder if that would have happened if he had just waited for one of us."

With a sigh Bunny pulled out one of his eggs and began to paint, his paw shaking as he desperately dotted the pink shell in blue dots.

North wordlessly returned to Jack's side, resettling in his chair next to the twitching teenager, his thoughtful blue eyes succumbed to worry.

Tooth watched forlornly for a few moments, before she fluttered to the side of the room needing a moment to process everything that had happened.

****Meanwhile****

After comforting Sophie and putting her to bed, Jane and Meghan somberly wandered to the bedroom, where they held each other. Neither slept for the long hours that passed, each just gazed blankly at the wall, completely lost in the noise of their own thoughts.

The moment her phone rang, Meghan jumped three feet in the air, startling the wild redhead who had been cuddling her moments prior.

Meghan blindly snatched her phone beside her, clumsily dropping it twice in the covers before she clutched it tight. Instantly the brunette rushed the receiver to her ear, her heart quickening as she pressed answer.

"Hello is this Meghan Bennett?"

Meghan's breath caught in her throat, her guilt reeling mind causing her to panic as she heard the slight urgency in the officer's commanding voice. Her girlfriend quickly steadied the shaking Meghan, grabbing her shoulder and gripping her shaking hand with her own. Meghan let out a tiny gasp before she quickly answered.

"Yes, it's me."

The officer let out a breath of audible relief as Meghan could hear the faint smile spreading across the man's face. "We found your son Jamie, he's alive with a few injuries, but nothing life threatening. He's being treated at Burgess ST. George hospital currently."

Meghan covered her mouth joyously as tears began to bubble in her haunted eyes, Jane gripped the brunette's hand tighter, relief circulating between the partners.

"When can I see my baby?" Megan squeaked, emotion flooding her teary voice.

The police officer sighed and seemed slightly more wary as he answered the emotional mother, causing Meghan's relieved expression to slip back into anxiety and terror.

"You can come by in the next hour. We had to sedate Jamie when we retrieved him from the crime scene for his own safety, he was not cooperating with first responders and seemed quite panicked. He is still unconscious."

Jamie's mother felt her eyes glance down at the floor, her body becoming clammy and numb.

"What happened, why was he sedated?" Meghan questioned quietly.

The officer sighed, "I'm sorry miss Bennett, but I can't discuss this in detail over the phone. Please... come to the hospital and me and my fellow officer will be there shortly after to fill you in on all the details, we will explain everything that we can."

Meghan was quiet for a moment, her mind now flooding with more questions and concerns.

"Okay." The mother whispered softly.

"Okay, we will talk to you soon, Miss Bennett."

After hanging up the phone, Meghan gazed off into the wall blankly, her face emotionless as she collected all her jumbled thoughts.

Noticing her girlfriend's silence, Jane raised her eyebrows, her eyes wide. "What did they say to you?"

Meghan blinked facing the ceiling as she reminded herself how to speak. "They have him and he's okay, but..."

Meghan paused a quizzed expression mixing with the anxiety on her face. "They had to sedate him for his own safety.."

Jane soon grew the same confused and terrified expression.

Swiftly Meghan stood up, her confusion subsiding as she felt her anxiety bolting her forward. She turned to her curly red haired partner. "Can you watch Sophie for me?"

Jane dipped her head swiftly, her confusion fading as to determination, "Of course, she'll be fine. You go get Jamie."

####Meanwhile###

"Jack!" A young girl shouted, her voice a playful cry.

Despite the friendliness in the child's voice, Jack cowered knowing all too well what was going to come next.

The joyous voice sounded again this time a bit more unsure.

"Jack!?"

The teenager covered his ears, his thin frame shaking.

"Please stop." The teenager begged

It was always the third time, no matter how much he ran or fought to find her, it was always the same.

"Jack!" This time the child was clearly more upset as a strong sense of terror had overgrown the joy in her once playful voice.

Jack couldn't help himself, despite knowing all too well how futile it was, he began to reach up, desperately clawing at the ice above his head, the cold dark around his body becoming freezing and wet.

"Jack!"

The young girl's voice was much more frantic, her cry louder as her hand reached forward towards the icy opening.

Jack's heartbeat slowed in his chest as water exploded his fragile lungs, his frantic thrusts towards the icy surface becoming more faint. Jack's eyesight dimmed as fear began to engulf his entire being into darkness.

It usually ended around there, but suddenly Jack found himself dumped in the middle of a dark wooded area.

Jack's eyes shot wide as he desperately flung himself upward, spinning around desperately. His mind lost in confusion and terror Jack slipped and fell to the ground with a yelp, his head slamming into the unforgiving damp ground.

"HELP!"

A familiar frantic cry caused Jack to forget the immense pain in his head as he dragged himself upward, his eyes wide with horror.

"Jamie?" Jack whispered in terror.

"Jack!"

The teenager bolted forward, his mind trained on the trail ahead, his legs spinning wildly as he fought aggressively through the thorny brush.

Jack's ragged breathing stung his wounded lungs as he rushed up the dirt path, his mind still reeling.

Suddenly the teenager arrived at the sight, finding the blood red vehicle that was so horribly familiar. Jack's wide eyes began to fill with tears as both Jamie and his sister's voices screamed for him frantically from the back of the large vehicle. Jack shot forward, feeling his legs turn to jelly as he rounded the van's left rear, finding the doors wide open. Jack stumbled and fell before the wide open van doors, hitting his head slightly on the ground as he crashed to the dirt road. Grimacing, Jack shot his head back upward to confront the disturbing scene. Inside the ominous vehicle was the horrible sight of his sister, desperately struggling in the grip of the dark haired boy, tears streaming down her freckled face as she fought against his rough hands. The dark haired boy had this malicious smile on his face that caused Jack's fist to ball in fury and horror, his nails digging deeply into his palms, allowing crimson to drip down his hand. Beside his sister and Will was the red haired man whose face was burned into Jack's memory, below him was the bloodied Jamie who was frantically fighting the man pinning him to the ground.

Both children fought desperately, pleading and screaming as the captors continued to rip at their forms, chuckling the more the children screamed.

Meanwhile

"NO!"

Jack screamed and rocketed upward in his bed spooking every other guardian in the small infirmary room. Bunny nearly dropped the egg he had been painting while Tooth quickly rushed to the young guardian's side. North bolted upright from his seat next to Jack, quickly grabbing the winter's spirit's clammy hand.

Jack continued heaving, his shaking body covered in sweat as he twisted his terrified eyes around the small stoney room.

Seeing the terrified look in the young guardian's eyes, North placed a hand on the teen's uninjured shoulder, firmly yet softly stopping Jack from shooting into the air.

"Jack, calm down, you and Jamie is safe." The Russian assured the frantic teen.

Jack's eyes shot towards North, and to the leader guardian's surprise he saw tears brimming in the teen's gray and blue irises. North and Jack held eye contact for a moment, the horrified look on the teenager's face leaving an uneasy pang in North's mind.

"Jack!"

Jack's frantic eyes unlocked from North as the tooth's small palm quickly grabbed the winter spirit's other hand.

"Jack, it's alright, we're at North's place right now. Jamie is safe." The colourful fairy made sure to emphasize the child's well being in her assurance.

Hearing this, Jack's panicked heaves slowed, but his shaking continued as he gazed into Tooth's face, his mind a million miles away.

Even Bunny remained taken aback by Jack's uncharacteristic behavior, his anger all but disappearing as he watched the usually snarky sprite turn into a quivering child. The pooka's fuming emeralds cooled as he cautiously stepped towards the young spirit, his own anxiety heightening as he wondered what had caused this change in the mischievous teen's behaviour.

Jack's frightened eyes switched to the rabbit causing bunny to freeze in his tracks as he peered down at the shivering teen. Jack held his gaze for a few moments, tears sliding down his porcelain cheeks. An eerie silence covered the room, the only sounds to be heard were those of Jack's exhausted lungs.

Finally, Jack unlocked his eyes from the 6ft 1 guardian, his shaking hand lifted to feel the salty discharge running down his pale cheeks. Jack gazed down at the tears that he had collected on his hand, his mind finally coming back to his present circumstance. The teen felt his stomach drop as he wiped the tears away from his red face, avoiding the gazes of the concerned guardians around him.

"Fuck." He mumbled softly, his voice on the edge of a sob.

All of the other guardians froze, taken aback by the teen's uncommon curse.

Jack desperately wiped the tears from his face while the heat in his cheeks became unbearable to withstand, especially in front of his small audience. Jack attempted to stand up from his bed but was surprised when North firmly pushed him back down.

"Jack.." the giant of a man said softly, "stay down you need to rest for a bit."

The rabbit next to the boy nodded, "Mate give yourself a minute alright, blimey, North had to give you stitches."

Jack's eyes widened, blinking as he wiped the last of the tears from his face, a genuine sting of shock tensing his mind.

"oh.." Jack stuttered, his mind flowing back to the pain he had felt while leaving the van.

"I guess that makes sense." He said softly.

"Mate..what the hell happened to you? You weren't nearly this beaten up when we found you earlier.." Bunny's voice was oddly quiet and mixed with concern and a sense of bewilderment.

There was a long silence as Jack attempted to regain his thoughts, his mind still feeling quite foggy.

"I.. I beat up those men that were holding Jamie captive," Jack finally admitted.

The three elder guardians froze, their eyes bulging.

"You what?" North whispered, his eyes wide.

Tooth blinked,"how..how did you do that, adults can't see.."

"It was the wind.." Jack stated quickly, his eyes wide,"it helped me, somehow."

Bunny stared at Jack for a moment before shaking his head,"why didn't you call us Jack?! You really banged yourself up plenty over exerting yourself, why did you.."

Jack's eyes narrowed, orbes sparkling with tears as he snapped his gaze to meet the frustrated rabbit. "You didn't see what they were doing to him." Jack spat hatefully, cutting off Bunny from his rant.

The rabbit's breath seemed to get caught in his throat, eyes widening, the anger in Bunny's face subsided quickly as he locked eyes with Jack once more. The teen glared angrily towards the guardian of hope, but yet seemed to stare right through him as if focused on something else.

North attempted to place a comforting hand over Jack's palm, but Jack softly pulled away and brought his eyes to his hands, pulling his knees to his chest.

One could hear a pin drop as the three guardians surrounding the small infirmary bed paused with baited breath, as if all oxygen had been sucked out of the tiny room.

Jack let out a tiny sigh as he wiped the remaining tears from his eyes. "When I first got close to that van, I heard screaming." Jack refused to confront the horrified expressions around him, and continued to speak.

"I went to look in the window and I saw.."

Jack paused, biting his lip.

"I..I saw Jamie." Jack bit down harder on his lip, as fiery tears began to drip down his cheeks.

"He was being attacked, these..men, they had him on this blanket, tied up and they were..."

Jack's voice cracked towards the end of his sentence, his angry shutters vibrating his thin frame.

Jack sniffed and continued, "He was crying so hard... I've never seen anyone that scared in my life..."

Jack felt every bone in his body begin to melt as he was barely even able to pronounce the next 5 simple words that he never wanted to speak, especially not about any child.

"They tried to rape him."

It was like everyone's hearts stopped.

Finally when Jack had the minisquel of courage to look up, he found everyone's faces staring at him but at the same time seemed to be a

million miles away. North had the same expression from when Jack had nearly ruined Easter printed on his face, causing Jack to cringe and turn to the tooth fairy floating a few feet away from him.

Her dainty hands hovered over her mouth in a shocked gesture, her violet eyes shining like they were on the verge of tears or falling apart all together. Out of the corner of his eye Jack peered over at the 6 foot Jack rabbit, not knowing what to expect. The moment Jack's eyes caught sight of the rabbit all he saw was pure agony. Bunny's usually strong fuming eyes looked like they had been shattered, like a rock to a glass window. The rabbit's keen muscles seemed to droop down absent mindedly as the sheer terror and horror of the entire situation took hold of their strong member. Even bunny's fur that was often shining a bright light blue seemed to just sink, leaving a depressed blue haze around him. The Jack rabbit's expression had fallen apart completely, his breath husking out of his chest like he was forcing himself to breathe. The worst part was the look in his eyes, the 6 foot guardian had eyes of steel that Jack could recall easily from all the pranks and back talk he had sent at the easily annoyed member, it was something Jack had been used to, even more so since Jack had become a guardian.

But the look on the rabbit's face was so unrecognizable with fear and shock as he just stared at the teen.

Jack could bear the sight no more and switched his gaze to the ground, tears rolling down his face.

For a few agonizing moments everyone just stood there in a cold dead silence.

Taking a deep breath Jack broke the silence, a solemn frown twisting his lips.

"I lost it. I started ramming into the window and when I broke the glass I just remember punching them. After they ran off I untied Jamie and the police arrived."

Jack sighed again, rubbing his neck, "when the police got into the van one of them scared Jamie and grabbed his wrist."

Everyone remained hauntedly trained on Jack as he gestured to his lower hand. "He was hurt, so he started to freak out when the guy started pulling on it."

Jack grimaced remembering the event, "I just... I couldn't handle seeing him get so scared again.. so I made the guy fall and tried to get out of the van.. I kind of crashed and hurt my head again."

Jack faltered in his speech, grimacing.

"I don't remember anything after that... and I guess that's when you guys found me." he said begrudgingly as if frustrated with himself.

North gazed at the teenager before him, his bright blue eyes swimming with tears as he reached forward but stopped. "Jack..I'm sorry you saw that.."

Tooth nodded, "that's awful Jack, I'm so sorry.." the fairy blinked quickly wiping away a few faint tears. "I'm not really sure what to say.."

"I know what to say.."

Everyone peered upward to catch sight of the towering rabbit whose eyes had now shrunk to a fiery stern expression. Jack's sorrowful eyes locked with the rabbit's fuming emeralds.

North and Tooth watched nervously from the background.

"Firstly, if it wasn't for your actions, Jamie would be in much worse shape."

Jack's eyes widened, as did the other guardians.

The rabbit's heated glare remained the same, "If it wasn't for you, and the speed ya have, I'm bloody sure those disgusting vermin would

have done what they wanted to Jamie. In that way I'm glad ya ran ahead."

Jack felt his stomach twist slightly, noting the more proposed anger and frustration that was now starting to pronounce itself on the pooka's face.

The rabbit sighed before looking up, "but what the hell were you thinking?"

"Bunny!" North snapped.

The rabbit's fiery gaze fell from Jack to North, "if you won't say it, I will North, so kindly shut yer trap!"

Bunny's fuming face locked onto the teenager before him. "Jack you were injured, what in hell is wrong with you!? Why did you run away from North!? Did you think he couldn't back you up, or did you just want to save Jamie yourself like some sort of self-insert hero story?"

Jack's nervous eyes quickly became narrowed as he glared furiously up at the rabbit.

"How dare you! I would never put that kid's well being over anything!"

"You scared Jamie to death!" Bunny fumed. "When we found you two, he was crying over your body begging you to wake up. If you had said something to North, he would have helped you and stopped you from hurting yourself more"

"I was sure I heard screaming!" Jack blurted, tears beginning to burn in his eyes, his defensive tone cracking.

"I just, I couldn't wait any longer.."

"It's not about that Jack..it's the fact you seem to think you need to do things by yourself." Bunny sighed, shaking his head. "like those stupid snow storms from last week.." Bunny muttered.

Jack snapped his fuming eyes towards the bunny. "He was being bullied at school, they were hurting him."

"So causing havoc with the weather was really the best course of action?"

"It was three snow days," Jack hissed, "it wasn't like you were helping Jamie."

"Jack, we have more to do than just throw snowstorms and cause havoc."

Tooth's uncomfortable expression turned to anger as she glared towards the rabbit.

"So that's what you do? Just abandon the child who saved your sorry kangaroo butt from pitch?" Jack chuckled sarcastically.

Bunny's pupils shrunk dangerously as he stepped forward towards the injured guardian. His mind replaying the haunting images of Jamie's terrified face.

"HEY! We did not abandon Jamie, we talked to him and you.."

"After the snowstorms and me asking you," Jack half laughed, "would you have talked to him at all if it wasn't for me? Do you even realize how much that kid idolizes you, how cool he thinks you are?"

Jack dug around in his pocket and yanked out the white piece of drawing paper that had been folded neatly into four small squares. The flustered guardian threw the drawing towards the large rabbit, eyes piercing the elder spirit.

Bunny snatched the paper from the air and raised an eyebrow towards the infuriated teenager, slowly the rabbit opened the small piece of paper to discover the sketch of himself smiling back at him, a colourful herd of Easter eggs surrounding his fuzzy feet. Bunny's eyes widened slightly as he admired the amount of detail in the

drawing, his pupils tracing the intricate designs that had been carefully drawn on each individual egg.

"He was going to give that to you today."

Bunny peered upward to find Jack's piercing stern eyes locking onto his stunned face.

"Well.. He wanted me to give it to you, but that whole meet up thing was kind of a surprise."

Shutting his eyes and running his frustrated palms through his hair, Jack sighed and turned to North. Desperate to change the subject Jack brought up the absence he had noticed a long time ago.

"Where's Sandy?"

North sighed, "he's at the hospital right now, he's watching over Jamie till he wakes up."

Jack's eyes shot wide, anxiety flushing his face.

"What!? How is he still in the hospital? What do you mean wake up, he wasn't unconscious before.."

Bunny finally tore his expression from the colourful drawing, thrusting the guilt he felt bubbling in his chest back into the recesses of his mind as he turned to face the anxious spirit.

"First off frost, it's early morn'in in Burgess, second, might I remind ya he had to be sedated because he was trying to get to ya while you were unconscious." The rabbit stated bluntly.

Jack stiffened feeling sheepish, 'right.."

Despite his sheepish reaction the teenager quickly perked up.

"Can I see him?"

Sternly North shook his head. "NO Jack, you need rest, you are injured, might I add much more than last time."

Jack's eyes widen and he gave the giant a frantic expression "But when he wakes up.."

"He will be fine, Jack." Tooth smiled, patting the teenager's hand softly.

"Sandy will fill him in on everything, he's going to be just fine." Santa nodded, thrusting a cup of hot coco into Jack's unoccupied hands.

Jack bit his lip, his grey and blue irises swirling with uncertainty as he held the warm mug rigidity.

"But he's going to be so confused when he wakes up," Jack argued, "he's going to be terrified."

"Sandy will make sure he feels safe," Bunny answered swiftly, "you're not going anywhere this time mate."

Jack's glared, his eyes darting from the swirls of chestnut coco to the ominous form of bunny in the corner of the room. Scanning the rabbit, Jack caught sight of a familiar object that glinted at him from the dreary dark. Eyes widening in recognition, the teenager's face hardened as he attempted to stand back up and dart towards the easter guardian but was instantly stopped as a venomous pain jetted from his shoulder.

"What are you doing with my staff?" Jack glared, flinching from the pain in his straining shoulder.

Bunny held the G ended wand carefully, his serious eyes drifting from its twisted top to the straight end of the centuries old staff.

"I'll take care of it mate, you don't have to worry about it gett'in damage or noth'in."

Jack's slitted pupils darted furiously from his age old weapon back to bunny. Once more Jack attempted to get up but was this time stopped by North who held his shoulder fast.

"What? Are you keeping me prisoner or something?" Jack hissed fretfully, turning to look at Tooth and North. "What's going on here?"

North sighed, "it's just an extra precaution to make sure you are fully rested by time you see Jamie."

"You better be kidding me," Jack scowled, "you all can't be serious."

Seeing the teenager's eyes sparkle with a faint glimmer of anxiety, tooth fluttered over gently placing a soft hand upon Jack's sleeve.

"It won't be long Jack, your injury looks worse than it really is. We can take the stitches out in a few days and you should be fine."

Jack's mouth swung open to argue but bunny quickly cut him off.

"Mate like it or not, you need rest, we're keeping this safe for you until your fully rested, just so there is no funny sneak'in out business."

Jack glared at the rabbit, "This is excessive, and since when was it anyone's responsibility to look after me?"

"Since now." North stated bluntly.

Jack bit his tongue and flinched, tasting crimson in his mouth once again. "Why now? It's not like this is the first time I've been banged up."

Bunny fell silent for a moment, his ears picking up on the winter bringer's quiet comment, "what do you mean by that, frost?"

Jack glanced upward and shrugged, scowling as he did. "300 years, 300 years I've been Jack frost, you know that?"

Jack turned to face the twitching nosed rabbit, his accusing expression mixed with a certain amount of sadness as he gazed off into space. Part of Jack questioned if his beaten head was influencing him still.

"Did you ever consider how I was alone through that?" Jack peered upward from his locks of white hair, his anger from prior replaced by genuine sadness. "I've taken a few bumps and scratches in my time, I didn't need help then."

North and tooth peered at each other sadly, a hint of guilt shining in their eyes as they glanced towards the young guardian. Jack refused to look up and instead gazed ahead at the floor thoughtfully.

Bunny glared down at the younger guardian, his mouth contorted in an emotional scowl. After a few seconds the rabbit spoke again.

"So it's not about Jamie anymore, is it?"

Jack shrugged emotionlessly and turned away sliding down his side on the small hospital cot.

"Thank you for fixing me up," Jack sighed. "but please, I just want to be alone for a bit."

Tooth and North stared at one another for a moment, each holding a mutual expression of defeat and sadness. Wordlessly both Guardians stood upward and headed towards the infirmary door. Bunny's emotional eyes glared at the teenager, before he eventually stood and followed the other guardians out of the room, Jack's elegant staff in hand.

Jack lay emotionlessly on the bed, his heart quickening as he felt his fellow guardian's presence disappear once more. The moment the large wooden door closed Jack buried his face into the thin blue sheet and began to sob quietly.

Meanwhile with sandy

When Sandy had first located Jamie's hospital bed in the children's ward, he had been surprised to find the little boy was still unconscious. The dream spirit sat next to the child anxiously, desperate to catch any fragment of info on the child's condition as he waited for an adult to appear. Sandy had been taken aback by the bruises and blood on the child, the blood in particular had spooked the small guardian but thankfully there didn't seem to be a lot. The guardian of dreams had also noticed the raw circular mark's on the boy's wrist where the zip ties had cut into his skin. Jamie's wounded other wrist had been wrapped up in a protective cast that kept his hand and lower arm straight. Sandy continued to watch the child, monitoring his soft breathing and occasional twitches. Stepping closer to the 11 year old, Sandy touched the child's head and felt a burning sensation tease his sandy fingers. Frowning, the spirit looked around nervously, still finding no doctors coming to aid. Impatiently Sandy let out a noiseless sigh and adjusted the blankets around the child's chest, his thoughts trailing back to the winter spirit's condition. Sandy sat next to the boy for a number of long agonizing minutes, his agitation and impatience getting the best of him each time he saw a doctor rush past the room's door. Finally a female doctor and her assistant appeared at the hospital room door, causing Sandy to let out a much needed sigh of relief.

"This is Jamie Bennett?" The doctor asked the nurse softly.

The Male nurse nodded stepping closer to the Jamie's bed, "yeah, he was the boy who the police rescued from the crime scene, they had to sedate him."

The doctor nodded and came closer to the hospital cot, leaning forward she felt Jamie's forehead while the invisible Sand spirit watched anxiously from the side.

The Guardian felt his heartbeat quicken as he noticed the concerned frown that had quickly appeared on the doctor's face. The dark haired lady pulled her hand from the resting boy's head and quickly began jotting notes on her clipboard, her eyes slightly widen.

"It's odd, his temperature shouldn't be that high.."

Sandy flinched, his anxious eyes darting from the doctor to the boy below her.

The lady's hands gently tugged the boy's blankets downwards, allowing her access to the boy's chest. Gently the doctor placed her stethoscope over Jamie's heart and listened carefully for a few long moments.

"His heart beat is normal.." she mumbled.

Sandy nervously played with his hands as he watched the lady pull away.

"His mother will be here soon, and the detectives are in the next room. Can you please ask them if they want any coffee?" The doctor instructed.

The dark haired nurse gave a nod and obediently walked out of the room. When the door closed the doctor sighed and checked Jamie's temperature, pulling out a small thermometer.

Sandy watched the doctor like a hawk, his golden eyes watching the lady's every movement intently.

Pulling the thermometer away from the child once more, the doctor sighed and took note of the number displayed on the tiny screen. Peering over nervously, Sandy's eyes widened when he saw the temperature of 103.

The doctor frowned before she began to adjust the heart monitor next to the child which was beeping consistently. Sandy turned his gaze from the doctor to Jamie, his eyes wide as he watched the child continue his rhythmic breaths, now noticing how shaky those gasps for breath were.

Planned Attack

I was hoping to get this out by Halloween, but it's out now instead. The story I have planned is so much more different from the original that it's like a new story. Hope you enjoy.

Chapter 6 - Planned Attack

The grand wooden door to the small infirmary closed with a thundering thud. Outside the large oak door stood 3 guardians, each with varied looks of concern on their faces. The giant Russian Santa had his brows furrowed in a troubled manner, while the fairy beside him fluttered nervously. Following the pair was a large muscular rabbit, in his hand was a crooked G-shaped staff, pulsating with icy magic. The moment the thundering echo had sounded, the rabbit grumbled.

'Typical of that sprite.'

The fluttering female form in front of him suddenly bolted towards the large pooka, a look of fury burning in her violet eyes.

'What was that bunny? What were you thinking?'

The rabbit jumped back slightly, surprised by the aggressive action of the smaller member. Bunny's narrowed eyes widened as he stared breathlessly at the fuming guardian, after a moment his stiffened posture softened and he attempted to push away the anxiety burning in his chest.

'What?'

The fairy crossed her arms and glared, 'did you really have to constantly undermine Jack and berate him?'

The rabbit huffed, 'what are you talking about that sprite could have gotten himself killed.'

'So saying all he does is make snowstorms and accuse him of saving Jamie for his ego was part of your helpful talk with him?'

Bunny blinked and shook his head,' His actions traumatized that child more than he already was! Jamie was practically fight'in to get away from those ambulance workers to get to Jack, maybe if Jack had waited he wouldn't have hurt himself so badly.'

The fairy landed on her refined feet, despite her shorter stature her infuriated presence towered over the large rabbit. 'Then why did you have to make it so personal," the fairy said exuberated," I don't know what you two have fought about in the past but this is not the time!'

North gave a nod towards Tooth, his eyes still thoughtful and lost,' Bunny, this is not the time to bring up old wounds, I know you are frustrated with Jack but he is just as upset as the rest of us right now.'

Bunny's emerald irises flexed as he stared open-mouthed at the giant before him,' North, you know that's not an excuse for what happened.'

'I know Bunny!" the giant hissed loudly, causing the rabbit to tense slightly at the unusual sound. North's brows had furrowed angrily as he glared at the guardian, after a few moments his anger faded and an exhausted expression flooded the tired guardian's pointed face.

'I know, Bunny, but enough damage has already been done, let dust settle for now." North whispered, his eyes becoming lost in thought once more.

Tooth sighed in frustration as she flittered upward again, her voice no longer sounding angry but more defeated,'I've got to go help my fairies, I'll be back.'

With a speedy rush of wind, Tooth exploded past Bunny without saying a single word, leaving the two male guardians to watch her disappear as she zipped out from one of the exit doors.

Bunny frowned, his ears lowering slightly as he turned to look down at Jack's glittering staff in his hands, regret flooding the hesitating rabbit's weakened posture.

'I'll take Jack's staff for now,' North whispered, holding out a large hand.

Bunny gave a nod and handed the weapon to the towering spirit, before exhaling and beginning to walk toward the fireplace, in an attempt to warm his cold feet.

Sandy was awoken from his thoughts when he heard the sound of commotion in the next room, his eyes widening as he recognized the voice in the nearby reception.

"I'm Meghan Bennett. My son, his name is Jamie, Jamie Bennett. He was brought in an hour ago."

The voice sounded horrified, but the mother's overpowering forcefulness still shone through her timid voice.

Sandy glanced back towards the covers, his anxiety rising to see the sweat bubble on the boy's boiling forehead.

"Of course Miss Bennett, he's Just down the hall, Doctor Newman will lead you."

Sandy waited nervously for the hospital door to creek open, his eyes darting from the doorknob to the shakily breathing Jamie. After a few moments, the door opened to reveal the doctor from earlier along with a tired-looking thin figure. Sandy immediately recognized the petite chestnut-haired woman with familiar hazel eyes.

Jamie's mother peered breathlessly at the bed in front of her, her large eyes fixated on the smaller form that lay silently in his bed. Wordlessly, Meghan walked forward, her eyes still trained on her son's form, her speed was slow but it quickly sped up as she

collapsed to the floor next to the child's hospital cot, softly taking his small hand in her own.

Following shortly on the mother's heels was the dark-haired female doctor, her soft green eyes carrying a similar expression to the invisible spirit that overlooked the scene.

Tears bubbled in the mother's eyes as her shaking form attempted to stand, now viewing the battered and scratched child whose eyes remained shut tightly, face twisted slightly in his sedated sleep. Her large doe eyes spied the many thorn bush slashes that permeated the child's face and limbs, leaving faint red marks on his peach skin. Meghan gulped as she noticed the circular thin rigs of raw flesh that circulated on one of Jamie's wrists, the other being covered by a small cast. More tears continued to well in the gray-faced brunette as she swiftly began to wipe away at her now reddish eyes. Solemnly the doctor behind the mother slowly stepped forward, her glasses perched on the edge of her slightly pointed nose.

'He has a sprained wrist and had a nasty bump on his head, he also has several scratches.' Doctor Newman's eyes scanned the boy over again, her eyebrows raising slightly as she noted the sweat pooling on Jamie's forehead.

'He has a fever, but otherwise, he is healthy.'

Meghan turned to face the doctor, her hand still holding Jamie's, 'Why does he have a fever?'

The doctor tilted her glasses, 'likely due to the stress and exposure to the cold, but I'm sure he'll be fine.'

Sandy saw through the doctor's assuring tone immediately, as his round golden eyes locked onto the child worriedly.

The unease remained in the mother's eyes as she turned back to her little boy, watching his chest rise and fall.

'There are some detectives who would like to talk to you, Miss Bennett, should I give you a moment before I let them in?'

Meghan's grip on Jamie's hand tightened slightly, her eyes still distantly gazing into her boy's unconscious expression as if telepathically urging the child to open his eyes. There was a very long pause as both spirit and doctor waited for the woman to respond, Sandy pulled at his soft sand robes uncomfortably as the seconds passed.

'Miss Bennett?'

Finally the latter responded, 'I want to get this over with.'

The doctor gave a soft nod, 'Would you like them to come in here?'

Meghan's shoulders sagged but her turn was abrupt, 'please, I can't be away from Jamie right now.'

The doctor gave a curt nod and stepped back towards the exit, closing the door as softly as she had opened it. Three presences remained as a ghostly solemn atmosphere engulfed the silence. Sandy and Meghan mimicked the other's movements as they gazed down upon the boy in the hospital cot, neither aware of the other's actions. Sandy traced the boy's scrapes and bruises with his soft orbs, his lips near to quivering at the sight of the boy's red wrist. Jamie's expression remained unreadable as his little chest continued to rise, the heart monitor next to him beeping quietly. Once again the door opened and Sandy spied two male detectives appearing at the entrance of the room, dressed in police uniforms. Meghan finally got up from her crouched position by the small child and nervously looked both staid officers up and down.

'Hello Meghan, were Detective Randy and Joel, You talked with me on the phone.'

Meghan gave a short nod, a string of chocolate hair falling from her messy ponytail.

The officers passed a glance towards Jamie, their somber expressions shining sadly. ' we're here to give you some updates on the case.'

Meghan gave another nod as the shorter indigenous officer offered her a fold-out metal chair. The adults all sat down a few meters away from Jamie's hospital cot, a fair distance between the young mother and the two detective officers, Sandy watched from the background curiously, his worried eyes scanning the two men.

'We caught the boys who took your son.' The balding Randy said quietly.

Meghan raised her eyes to meet the man's soft blue, her brown eyes widened in surprise.

'Boys?'

The officer beside Randy nodded, his short dark hair slightly covering one eye as he dipped his narrow face. 'They are fairly well known to police, they're young, oldest is 25 the youngest 18.'

Meghan placed a hand over her heart in surprise, 'You caught them?'

Sandy felt his gut drop in shock hearing the perpetrator's ages, his mind bubbling with confusion as he passed another glance towards the resting Jamie.

'Yes, it wasn't hard, they were all hiding further out in the woods from the crime scene.' Joel's eyes darken, 'all of them seemed pretty shaken up, especially the youngest.'

Randy sighed, ' Thankfully this was their first time doing anything this severe, they were extremely inexperienced, which is a mild way of putting it.'

Meghan's eyes narrowed, 'severe? You say they are known to the police? What were they arrested for before?'

Sandy found his focus being transferred from the child beside him, to the adult's conversation, his own eyes narrowing as he waited to hear the young men's names.

Randy paused for a moment sensing the sudden accusation in the woman's tone, biting his lip the officer continued, 'the youngest found is named Will Smith, he's been known for abusing animals in his neighborhood, he also has a rap sheet of fighting at school, he was eventually expelled because of it.'

Meghan blinked, 'Why wasn't anything done? Abusing animals, isn't that warrant of some sort of arrest?'

Joel gave a knowing look towards the mother, 'no one could prove for sure if he was involved with the disappearances of local cats.'

Meghan's mouth went dry as the officers continued, 'The second is the eldest, his name is Eric Welsh, and he has a rap sheet of minor drug offenses. The final perpetrator was the head of the operation, he got the others to do his bidding more or less. His name is Keith Anderson, we don't have much on him besides his little sister coming out a few years ago about a sexual abuse claim against him, but she later retracted her statement.'

Meghan's eyes slowly began to widen, her breath catching in her throat, 'Did..'. Meghan found herself frozen unable to believe her horrible suspensions as her mind blanked to an unending white.

Sandy bolted upward as well, his eyes darting from the child to the officers, his heart beating like a frantic butterfly in his chest.

Randy sighed and shook his head, 'We found a recording on Eric's phone when we arrested all of them.'

Meghan's jaw dropped as she stood from her chair, her eyes watering as she stared in horror at the officer, 'They...'

Sandy waited with bated breath, his own heart-stopping as he felt his lungs strain for air. While the small guardian was distracted a tiny black swirl of sand wisped past the sand man's feet, scurrying into the darkness of the hospital bed's shadows.

Randy reached forward and placed a comforting hand on the woman's arm,' we have viewed the tape.' The officer sighed, his dark eyes appearing ghostly, 'we have more than enough to prosecute them.'

'D..did... did they actually..'

'They seemed to have tried but they were unsuccessful, my other officers are interviewing them currently.' Randy mumbled darkly.

Meghan remained frozen for a moment absorbing everything she had just heard, after a moment she slowly sat back down on the cold metallic chair. With a thud, Meghan hit the seat, a sharp squeak sounding from the rusty leg. Cradling her head, Meghan pressed her face in her shaking hands, her fingers curling into her scalp.

Sandy watched helplessly from the sidelines of the horrendous scene, faint tears dripping down his golden cheeks. Still, the guardian of dreams remained unaware as a beetle the color of the midnight sky slowly began its crawl from the hospital bed covers to the resting child, its shell coated in rough black sand. The little bug hobbled closer to the sleeping Jamie, its antenna raising as it caught the scent of its desired target

After a moment Meghan looked up again, 'Why was Jamie sedated?'

Joel spoke first, 'He was fighting to get away from the ambulance personnel, he kept trying to run.'

Randy rubbed his neck, eyes darting to the ceiling, 'He kept yelling this name and running over to a snow bank, according to my team's accounts.'

Meghan's grip on her hair loosened slightly, her confused eyes darting to the officers, 'What? That doesn't make any sense, what was the name?'

'Jack.'

Meghan's pupils enlarged in realization as she stared dumbfounded at the two officers, eventually, Meghan turned to look at her unconscious boy with a pained expression.

Sandy bit his lip and frowned, avoiding the mother's gaze.

After a moment Randy spoke again, his eyes narrowed inquisitively, 'Does your son have an older brother or something, Miss Benett?'

'No, it's his imaginary friend.' Meghan muttered softly.

Joel and Randy glanced at one another, their eyebrows raised, 'Jamie's 11?'

Meghan nodded and sighed, 'I'm not sure what it's about really, it's a long story.'

There was a moment of silence between the adults. Sandy sighed and turned to look at Jamie once more, his worried eyes skimming the boy over before returning his sorrowful gaze back to the conversing adults. As soon as the shot guardian had looked away, the beetle appeared from the thin blanket covers once again, its speed intensifying as it rushed towards the child's ear, mandibles exposed as it changed forth towards the defenseless boy.

'I was hoping Jamie might be awake, we wanted to ask him some questions regarding the identity of the men and the events that took place.'

Joel leaned back in his chair, his eyes drifting to the speckled white ceiling, 'That crime scene was odd, strange really.'

Meghan blinked, 'How so?'

Joel shrugged, 'It's hard to explain, I never saw it myself but my fellow officer Starling explained it to me.'

Randy nodded his eyes a thoughtful half mask, 'they had to kick the doors of the van lose because they were so encased in ice and frost.'

Meghan's eyes widened, her face becoming slightly pale, 'Ice and frost?'

Randy nodded, 'It's quite a mystery really, I thought we were over that kind of weather...'

Meghan was awoken from her thoughts when an ear-piercing scream erupted behind her, causing both woman and the guardian beside her son to jump in shock. Sandy swiftly switched his gaze to the now writhing Jamie, who was ripping and tearing wildly in the blankets surrounding him. Sandy launched forward to try and steady the struggling boy but was stopped dead when he saw the immense cloud of black sand whizzing violently above Jamie's head. Sandy's mouth fell agape as he watched the swarming mass of black shift and reveal the shades of crimson red sand mixing with the particles of black. The storm of red and black glittered menacingly as it began to shift and take the form of two figures, one being half the size of the other. Jamie began sobbing uncontrollably as he violently kicked and squirmed, his movements matching those of the boy in his nightmare that fought the larger figure holding him down.

'Jamie!'

Meghan leaped forward and began to try and steady her panicking child, but was pushed away swiftly as Jamie threw himself away from the mother's grip.

The heart monitor next to Jamie began to beep much more frequently as Doctor Newman and her nurses charged into the room, alerted by the child's sudden screaming.

Sandy quickly slashed his sand whip towards the immense cloud of sand, his eyes narrowed with fury and terror as he saw the bloody black mixture repair itself as quickly as he had sliced it.

Jamie let out another frantic cry as the nurses and doctors around him swiftly began to try to calm the still unconscious boy, his struggling and squirming becoming much more violent as nurses gripped his limbs.

'He's going to hurt himself, steady him!'

"JAMIE!" Meghan rushed towards her boy but was stopped by officer Joel, His stern but gentle hold restraining the mother.

Jamie thrashed again, his screeching intensifying, 'Let me go!'

Sandy slashed at the nightmare sand again, this time allowing the cloud to disperse slightly more, the bloody black mixture becoming fainter.

'Watch his wrist!' Newman shouted as she pulled out another sedative.

Jamie whined frantically as he shuddered underneath the grip of the nurses, his body sweating feverishly, 'Help me!'

Meghan clawed at Joel's arm like an animal but soon calmed herself as Jamie's struggling became less intense.

Newman thrust the needle into Jamie's arm, causing the child's movements to slow and his whimpering to quiet.

The cloud of sand remained above the small form, Sandy's whip slashes becoming wilder as the sand figures continued their haunting display. Sandy watched in horror as the little figures stumbled and fought, the smaller one struggling wildly underneath the older figure. Jamie sobbed softly as his body was forced to become stiller, his whimpers intensifying as the tall shadow in his

dream began to push his figure to the ground. Sandy's eyes shot wide in terror when he caught sight of the knife in the crude figure's hand, raising it above his head like a mighty arrow to plunge into the smaller sand figure who squirmed uselessly against the attacker. Jamie let out a sharp whine, his face twisted with terrified anticipation of the pain he was about to endure. With a sharp strike, Sandy used his whip and guided dream sand to smash into the cloud of molten nightmare cloud, dispersing it into nothing more than shards of nightmare sand. Jamie let out a heavy gasp as if he had just come up for air in a stormy ocean, his weak body pulsating with sweat. Sandy heaved heavily as he stood over the hospital cot, his arms shaking as he slowly withdrew his whip, his mind still reeling with shock at what he had just seen.

Jack allowed himself to collapse and quietly cry, his brain spinning and reeling with the many emotions and thoughts that had stained his frantic mind. Jack gripped his pillow in anguish as the tears continued to flood down his porcelain cheeks, his face stinging from the heat of his pained salted discharge. Jack could not recall how long he had cried, but by the time he could no longer feel his raw eyes produce any more tears, his insides had become cold and empty, an emotionless cloud of despair flooding his every pore. Jack barely moved from his position, allowing his soaked pillow to rub against his already wet cheeks. The teenager lay there for a long time while replaying the same haunting images in his exhausted mind over and over, his already weakened and wary body becoming numb and useless. Slowly Jack brought his head up from his damp pillow, his reddish eyes peering around the small stone infirmary. Jack's eyes darted around the area, his thoughts returning to his current circumstances as he felt a certain parchedness in his mouth. With a pained grunt, Jack forced his body to sit upward, a sharp hiss escaping his lips as he placed a strain on his shoulder once more. Peering around the small room, Jack found himself next to a small stained glass window that overlooked the mountain peaks surrounding the hideout. Jack watched the endless snow for a few moments before looking over the window and finding it was

completely built into the wall structure. Jack's eyes narrowed as he turned to examine the large oak infirmary doors, eyeing the door knob that seemed to be miles away. Contemplating his next move, Jack gingerly pulled himself from the thin cover of blue and swung his legs over the side of the bed, his feet softly touching the stone floor. Pausing for a moment Jack glanced down at himself and realized for the first time he was wearing an oversized cotton shirt instead of his navy blue hoodie. Jack sighed and rubbed the fabric between his nimble fingers before he attempted to stand upward. Jack vocalized another hiss as he felt his shoulder and head scream at him to lie back down, a thundering line of pain echoing across his wounded body. Giving in, Jack sat back down and sighed in frustration, eyeing the large oak doors with a contemplating expression. For a long time, Jack was hypnotized by the exit, until to his shock the large doors opened. The slow creaking of the hinges caused Jack's eyes to widen in surprise, his body becoming nervously stiff as he waited for the entering party to reveal themselves. Judging by the soft push of the door Jack predicted to see a slim feathered figure but was surprised to see the burly face of North quietly open the ancient doors. Jack tensed slightly as North stepped towards him, his already towering figure exaggerated by the small room. North's expression was one of concern as he cleared his throat somewhat nervously.

'Hi Jack, how you feeling now?'

Jack rubbed his neck, pausing slightly as he shifted under the covers. The teenager eyed the Guardian of wonder suspiciously as he peered next to the giant, searching for his crooked staff. Jack's response came out dully, his mind clearly somewhere else. 'Fine, I guess.'

The giant pause for once seeming to catch onto the cold tone of the wounded spirit. 'How is head and shoulder?'

As if on cue another slash of pain vibrated through Jack's skull, causing him to grit his teeth. 'Could be better.'

North gave an understanding nod.

'Jack, I'm sorry that bunny lost temper, he shouldn't have done that.'

Jack smirked sarcastically to himself, a snort escaping his thin lips. 'Shouldn't 'is a funny word,' Jack muttered. The sarcastic smile melted off the teenager's lips as he spied the hurt expression on North. 'Why are you apologizing for him?'

The giant sighed, rubbing his neck, 'he still needs to cool down.'

Jack frowned and glanced back out the window to the storming weather of the pole, the faint thuds of puffy flakes hitting the stained glass distracting from the deafening awkward silence. The winter bringer sensed North's gaze had joined him in viewing the windy display, both remained quiet for a few minutes, each admiring the pole's weather. Jack bit his lip bringing his gaze to his hands.

'I'm sorry I ran off,' Jack muttered 'I panicked'

North turned to look at the teenager, his soft blue eyes acknowledging the honesty in the other guardian's voice. With a sigh, North gave a nod and murmured, 'The main thing is you and Jamie is safe.'

Jack turned to look at the giant, his pupils dilated with concern as his frustration faded for a few short moments, 'Have you heard anything from sandy?'

Jack felt his heartbeat quicken slightly, his fists clenched as he waited anxiously for North's response. The giant sighed and gave Jack an understanding expression, 'No, but I'm sure we will soon.'

There was another silence as both guardians sat in mutual stillness for a few moments. Jack bit his lip and rubbed his arm, his mind replaying the haunting images of Jamie crying over him and the horrifying memories of seeing him inside the van.

'Jack, here..'

The teenager peered upward and his eyes quickly caught sight of a familiar G-shaped staff North gingerly clenched in his massive fists. The astonished Jack gazed in surprise as North pulled the staff from his side and softly handed it back into Jack's pale hands.

'We shouldn't have taken that.' North admitted with a sad whisper, 'I'm sorry.'

Jack fixated on his trusty weapon, his gray-blue eyes trailing up and down the thin staff in utter disbelief, his empty hands now feeling restored. Turning back upward to look up at the sheepish giant Jack whispered a shy regard.

'Thank you.'

North gave a nod before looking at the young guardian up and down. 'Do you want anything?'

'I could use a drink.' Jack admitted, feeling the dryness of his throat begin to agitate him once more.

North gave a cheerful clap of his hands and stood on his feet once more, 'Excellent I will be right back.'

Jack watched the towering man leave, a sad smile returning to his features as he saw the usual glimmer of cheerfulness and wonder spark back into the older guardian. As the door shut, Jack returned to admiring his staff once more, his hands tracing the frosted designs along its middle. The wind thrashed outside noisily causing Jack to glance back up from his staff to the wild weather outside, rattling the stained glass of the infirmary. Jack bit his lip and gazed off into the snow thoughtfully before another ripple of pain slid down his wary side. Hissing Jack grimaced and clenched his teeth as the pain began to ebb away into a cold numbness. Peering back upward Jack gazed off into the snow once more, his sad frown present on his ghostly reflection in the window.

'Hang in there Jamie,' the teenager whispered, 'I'll see you soon, promise.'

Meanwhile

Down into the depths of his nightmare palace, Pitch black watched in utter delight as his long-standing plan finally reaped fruition. He had sat for many months fuming over his humiliating defeat by the guardians he so desperately despised. He had come so very close, just so close to ending the guardians, destroying what barriers were left to allow his fear to take control of the world once more, he had come so *very very* close.

Yet he had been defeated just as he had centuries ago, by nothing more than a scrawny winter spirit and some bratt child. Pitch had fumed for days upon days, his spiteful mind fixated on nothing more than to take revenge on Jack frost, and make him pay for the world he had cost the nightmare king. Pitch remained trapped in his palace, unable to escape due to his battered and weakened power, yet another bitter reminder of his defeat. Once his fuming mind began to clear, Pitch concluded that the only way to avenge his beautiful lost world of fear was to destroy the thing that Jack cared for most. With what little dark magic he had left, the king of nightmares created a swarm of nightmare beetles that he would use as his eyes in the mortal realm. For months Pitch would watch Jack Frost, finding a place to hide his beetles to spy on the unsuspecting guardian. It soon became clear that a good spot to catch sight of this sprite was the home of that same brat who had defeated him months prior. Pitch watched Jack interact with the child for many months, witnessing their bond grow much to the nightmare king's satisfaction. It was then after seeing all he had, Pitch finally began to dream up his horrible plan, something much worse than what he had ever done before. Over the centuries Pitch black had existed, he had seen the worst of what humanity had to offer, the many physiological and physical traumas that could be inflicted on a person, Pitch had seen them all, and of course, had seen the devastating effects. It would be delightful to put that carefree winter brat through such a

tremendously harrowing experience, but that wouldn't be enough to destroy his spirit. Instead of simply stabbing his victim and leaving it there, Pitch wanted to twist the knife, there was no better way of doing so than by destroying the one Jack cared for most.

It did not take long to infect the boys he had found with his nightmare parasite, they were naturally drawn to the dark, and all they needed was the right nudges to spread their misery to his target. The entire abduction and attack was simply entertainment for the nightmare king, delighted by the simple fact that if Jamie would not fear him, he would fear something else. By the time the frantic frost sprite had managed to fight off his unknowing human vessels the damage had been done to his beloved believer, but the suffering had only begun. Pitch's golden eyes squinted with pure delight as he watched the boy squirm and fight the adults around him, his body trembling with the disease of fear and exhaustion. It was only a matter of time before his fever would overtake his immune system, and finally distinguish the one light that had cost Pitch his world. Even as Sandy had slashed the boy's nightmare into shards, Pitch merely smirked and sighed.

'Oh my dear little Sandman, you're only prolonging his death.'

SOS

Hey sorry for the wait, next chapter is here. I'll have the next one ready by Christmas. If anyone has any suggestions to what they'd like to see in the coming chapter or later chapters just comment. In this story there is a few references to the book series guardians of childhood but not much. Hope you enjoy.

Before Sandy could do anything to send some sort of message back to the guardians another jett of black and red sand had erupted from Jamie's temple, causing another violent fit of struggling and crying from the unconscious boy. Sandy rushed forth and quickly began to quell the dark crimson flames, tearing and slashing with immense power. Despite his ability to cut through the heaviest parts of the molten dream sand, the guardian was hesitant to use his powerful whips anywhere near the boy's body on the off chance the guardian would miss and hurt the child, or, more likely Jamie would squirm and suddenly move in the way of the razor sharp weapons. Despite the inconvenience, fighting off the nightmares was more than possible as Sandy worked tirelessly through the early morning hours to defend the unconscious boy. While the immortal guardian fought the clouds of aggressive sand, doctors constantly swarmed the 11 year old doing multiple tests on his squirming body in their futile attempts to understand what was going on with Jamie's movements and growing temperature. Meghan remained by Jamie's side the entire time, assisting doctors whenever possible by holding Jamie's flailing body when they needed him to be ready for a test. The hours that passed had been a trying affair with no end in sight, the worst part was it didn't seem to matter how hard Sandy fought to give the little boy a decent dream as it never worked. If Jamie was not having nightmares he was having cold dreamless sleep, despite Sandy's efforts, nothing seemed to penetrate the crimson aura that had surrounded the boy's temple. As the nightmares were forced into uneasy unrest, Sandy sat in the chair next to the mother with an exhausted plop, his mute body panting for breath. Meghan watched her resting boy anxiously, her big brown eyes tracing the movements

of his chest as she nibbled nervously away at her fingertips. Sandy silently heaved beside the unsuspecting mother, his golden orbs troubled by the boy's scrunched facial expression, an early sign of an upcoming nightmare. With what little time he had, the small sand spirit conjured a miniature sand airplane, with a banner tail on the end stating the acronym S.O.S. With his tiny robed hands the sand spirit guided the small aircraft out the hospital window and steered it north towards the pole. Watching the golden wings of the craft disappear into the rising sun, Sandy emitted a sigh of relief as he returned his gaze back to the boy in front of him, whom still remained unconscious and unaware of his presence. Both guardian and mother wore the same battle scars of a sleepless night, decked in bagging eyes and zombie like expressions. Neither noticed their aged appearances as they continued to watch the resting Jamie, each waiting for the same miracle to occur

'Can you pass me the screwdriver?'

A blond-haired boy with sharp blue eyes cautiously held his graphics card steady, his tongue slightly protruding from his mouth in concentration.

'Tina?'

The short red-haired girl next to the boy remained still unaware of her friend's request as she fitfully picked at her fingertips. She continued to stare at the ground, her sad vacant stare miles away.

The boy sighed, pulled his graphics card away from his computer build, and turned to the girl a few feet away from him. The boy's eyes were soft as he caught sight of Tina's hunched-over posture and nervously tapping fingertip on her right cheek. Nate frowned, and put his graphics card down, stepping towards his miserable next-door neighbour, and placing a hesitant hand on her skinny shoulder.

'Tina?'

The girl seemed to snap out of her lost trance as she shifted and gazed upward at her next-door neighbour, her eyes shadowed from lack of sleep.

'Oh sorry,' she whispered, 'I guess I didn't hear you again.'

Nate sighed, 'it's fine, I just asked for the screwdriver.'

Tina gave a nod and grabbed the unused tool from her untouched project, limply placing the screwdriver closer to Nate before returning her gaze to the floor.

Nate spied Tina's frayed fingertips, her fingernails lined in light blood and torn with multiple hangnails from her nervous tick. With a sad frown, Nate sighed, 'Tina, did you sleep much last night?'

The girl shrugged without looking upward, 'no.'

Silence permeated Nate's bedroom once more, an uncomfortable yet frequent visitor for the past few days. Nate stared wistfully at Tina's gadget she had meticulously developed alongside him, the mess of wires and cardboard now hanging distantly at the end of the table. The half-finished handmade VR headset sat deserted before the pair of troubled children, a taunting reminder of the past couple of days.

'Are you still thinking about what Cupcake said?'

Tina's shoulders stiffened into a revealing square as her fidgeting body became stiff as a board. The blond-haired 10-year-old felt his chest tighten, feeling his words strike his friend's emotional nerve.

Tina gazed into the wall for a long time, the tension in silence causing Nate's body to quiver with anticipation. Finally, Tina lowered her head, her voice slightly above a whisper, 'what if she's right?'

Nate gulped his own nerves now struck.

At the age of 6, Nate remembered moving to Burgess from his small town in Scranton Pennsylvania. Despite being so young, Nate could vividly remember many times on that journey when he felt so nervous and anxious, wondering where they were going and what was happening. Despite the constant reassurances from his patient parents, the timid child remained terrified at the thought of moving, even if he wasn't really leaving any friends behind. To calm himself, Nate would read his favourite book at the time, 'How to train your robot.' Despite being a fairly sickly child, Nate's ability to read while in the car remained as strong as it had years ago. When they had first arrived at their new home, the first thing the boy did was survey the area nervously from his car window eyeing the many middle-class suburban homes clustered in the tight neighbourhood. Nate's wide eyes landed on the small female redhead sitting under a tree next door. In her hands, she held a familiar book, one that was titled 'How to train your robot.' Nate remembered how his eyes had widened in recognition of the familiar title and how he had just stared in surprise for a period of time that he did not remember, suddenly, he had been shot back into reality when the girl looked up from her book and made direct eye contact with the boy watching her from the car. The child had initially frozen in place, his knuckles turning white as he clenched them nervously. Surprisingly, Nate noticed the same anxious reaction from the red-haired girl, her pupils shrinking slightly and her knuckles clenched. Both children seemed to have just gazed at the other for a short time as an awkward silence formed a stoney barrier between the parties. The wall was broken when the girl noticed the familiar book in Nate's hands, her green eyes pupils dilated in recognition and excitement. From that day forward, Tina and Nate had bonded in their own nerdy way, the naturally quieter children were loudest above all when they were with one another.

While clicking with Tina, Nate had befriended the oddball boy next door that would later be introduced to him as Jamie Bennett. The trio would often meet up and play silly imaginative games together, which were later joined by the twins and eventually Cupcake. Despite his friendship with the sporty Rocky, jokester Tommy, and the strong Cupcake, Nate had always felt a certain connection with

Tina that neither seemed to find anywhere else. Tina and Nate had previously never considered themselves to be very close to the twins or cupcake and to a certain extent Jamie who was often in his own little world. The pair often preferred the pair's quiet company to enjoy dabbling in different hobbies. Many things had changed over the past year, becoming closer to the headstrong and noisy Rocky was a big one, which was almost as surprising as finding out Jamie Bennett was not that odd after all. Jack's presence had caused such a new start for the pair, but despite their new closeness with all their friends the pair remained the other's preferred company. Through all the years Nate had known Tina, he had never seen her like this, yet it was unsurprising she would take the blame for the situation onto herself.

Nate bit his lip, 'Tina, none of this had anything to do with you. You had no idea those people were anywhere near the park.'

Tina had her back to Nate, an audible sniffing began coming from her hunched form, 'I know but that's not the point, I never should have suggested a game where everyone is separated after everything with the bullies at school.'

'That's not your fault, you were just trying to suggest a game everyone would like.'

Tina rubbed her eyes swiftly and turned around, emerald orbs tinged a light red from a familiar salty discharge.

'Still..even if I meant well, I was part of the reason it happened..Now Jamie's in the hospital after who knows what happened to him.'

Nate fought back his instinct to freeze and placed a comforting hand on Tina's shoulder. 'Tina, he's going to be alright, Jack will be with him, besides the tooth fairy told you everything was going to be okay.'

Tina sighed and gave a dull shrug, sitting up from her chair, 'she was only just saying that.'

Grabbing her Jacket the girl sighed and headed towards the door, 'sorry Nate but I have to go home.'

The boy watched her sadly as he felt a certain amount of shock overtake his small form, unable to stand the amount of unwarranted guilt that had been destroying his friend.

'Tina?'

The girl looked towards the boy for a moment, a gray frown prevalent on her chapped lips.

Nate paused slightly, intimidated by the depleted expression of the usually bright and cheerful girl.

Despite his hopes, deep down Nate had found he was extremely worried for Jamie. The entire ordeal had happened so fast that it was hard to believe it was real and not some sort of hazy nightmare. The situation was only made more unnerving by not hearing anything from Jack or any of the other guardians, leaving the group of children to only chat online and speculate and share updates from what they had seen on the news. Nate had grown to really enjoy Jamie's company, even before the time they had believed in Jack Frost, Nate would sometimes find himself becoming wrapped up in Jamie's curiosity and imagination as they researched different cryptic creatures. Even if Jamie had been much more convinced of their existence than Nate, it had become fun to research different folklore with the enthusiastic believer. Despite being an enthusiast for the unknown, Jamie was much quieter than Rocky and Tommy, and had a bit of a creative side as well, which was something both boys could connect over. Seeing the amber alert for his missing friend was something Nate was still trying to register mentally.

'..have you tried talking to your parents about it..?' Nate asked softly.

Tina barely reacted and instead looked away, 'they already know, I explained it to the officers with them.'

'I know, but.. you're clearly still thinking about it a lot, maybe they could help.'

Tina shrugged and fell silent, causing the familiar burning anxiety in Nate's chest to agitate his stomach. For the first time since he had met Tina, he had felt that anxiety toward her.

'Message me whenever you want, okay?'

Tina gave a nod and closed the door, leaving Nate to stare at the exit worriedly.

A flash of green, blue, and yellow darted across the early morning sky, the red of the sunrise silhouetting a speedy female being. Tooth's fluttering wings sent her forward like a gossamer thread towards the town of Burgess, her face stern and calculated, masking the many conflicting worries and thoughts in her haunted mind. As the guardian of memories continues her journey she attempted to calm her infuriated heart over the guardian of hope's actions towards the younger guardian Jack Frost. Even the thought of that horrible conversation they had executed with the injured teenager brought an angry red into the petite female's cheeks. It was nothing new for the guardian of hope to let his emotions take control of his actions, it was something she had come to get used to from the rabbit. In a way, Tooth felt a sense of pity for the large pooka, sensing his emotional unrest whenever they met. Despite the front the large mammal directed, it was clear to the kind hearted fairy that his deep insecurities were tearing at his mind, causing him to lash out the way he did. The quiet guardian had his past, Tooth knew this better than others as she held his very memories from his once mortal life, hundreds of years after their creation. For ages, the curious fairy questioned what the guardian of hope had faced and withstood over his years of life, mortal and non, despite having the guardians memories she had limited access to his sacred thoughts, no one did except him. She knew the great pooka had survived a great war, leaving him one of the few left of his kind, which the fairy could only guess how much that had affected Bunny. Despite the many years he had been in service as the guardian of hope, he remained

agitated, restless, and easily worked up, similar to an angsty teen. His snaps towards North's casual pokes at his character were something the fairy had come to ignore, a passing reminder the rabbit was immature for his older guardian age. Regardless of the emotional responses, the fairy still sensed a sadness in the pooka's presence, a shine of pain through his front that he had yet to express to anyone. There was nothing Tooth could do to relieve that pain for the larger guardian, it had to be relieved by himself, over the many centuries she co worked with the stoic guardian she watched him from afar, wondering if the time would ever come for him to be at peace. Bunny's insecurities had been highlighted by his severe frustration with their newest addition to the guardian circle, that being the mischievous Jack frost. Bunny's ridicule and distaste towards the young guardian was off putting and uniquely aggressive, Tooth was not completely sure why the rabbit was so easily frustrated with the winter bringer, she knew they had their past but she was still hazy on what exactly it was. There had been a change in bunny over the past year, something all of the guardians had noticed, counting Tooth. The rabbit remained uptight, but not nearly as easily agitated and seemed to have relaxed somewhat over the past year. Tooth keen interest was peaked by the smile the rabbit recently began to wear, not to mention the lightness in his once sadden presence. The guardian remained tied to his duties as the Easter bunny and bringer of hope, but he seemed to have a new interest in the remarkable child Jamie Bennett, especially his little sister Sophie. Tooth couldn't help but grin when she caught the rabbit watching Jack and Jamie play from afar, and how he occasionally greeted the child and his younger sibling. It was certain the children had not only resonated with the playful Jack, but the stoic Rabbit, which was something she hoped would bring the pair closer. Recently, whenever Tooth entered a room with the guardian of hope present, he seemed to always be wearing a smile, one which a nervous blush accompanied it. The strangely affectionate change in the rabbit's presence caused the fairy to blush herself as she felt new sudden giddy nervousness around the taller presence.

After all the new progress and growth, everything felt like it had been shot aside with the foul statements spouted from the rabbit's mouth, directed towards an already destroyed spirit. Seeing Jack break down was enough for Tooth to believe he had suffered enough from his thoughtless mistake, there was no need to cause even more damage to the wounded guardian, especially not to his trust in his fellow guardians that clearly was lacking. A large weight of guilt squared itself on the fairy's shoulders as she wondered what Jack had been through those many years he remained alone, unsure of who he was and why he was here. If only she had known, she could have helped him.

Her guilt ridden mind fell back on a certain red haired girl that her mind had been returning to, one who had been quite distressed during their last meeting.

Jack let out another moan of exhaustion as he rolled in his bed tiredly, his cool body protruding faint lines of beaded sweat. The half-conscious spirit moaned in exhaustion as his cramped body twitched uncomfortably.

North watched worriedly from the side of the spirit's cot, his eyes scanning the restless teenager over with soft blue eyes, his eyes focusing on the young guardian's twisted expression. A flood of worries and concerns flooded the elder guardian's mind as he opened his first aid and proceeded to pull out a clear solution.

'Jack, it's North, do you remember where you are?'

Jack emitted another pained moan as he clumsily rolled to his side to meet the tall guardian, his clammy body shaking slightly.

'I'm in your infirmary..' Jack mumbled, 'Why am I so sick?'

Jack's usually glimmering eyes peered up at North with a pure form of uncertainty, his lips drawn back into a nervous frown. North paused and gazed into the immortal teenager's face, taken aback by the helplessness in the voice of the other party. North took a moment

to collect his thoughts as he peered into Jack's hazy orbs, the eerie of the teenager's attitude striking a cord within him. Taking a cautionary breath North eventually answered, 'I think your cut is little infected, Jack.' North studied the guardian's reaction, before giving a comforting and encouraging smile, 'besides you really hurt yourself, body is healing.'

Jack gave a soft nod before resting his head back on his cool pillow, his pupils dilated slightly as he stared into the endless space of the small room.

'I've never sweat before...' Jack mumbled.

North couldn't help but smile lightly at the observation as he placed a comforting hand on the teenager's shoulder, the other untwisting the rubbing alcohol in his pack.

'How it feel.'

Jack squinted, going quiet as he contemplated his answer, 'It feels gross, to be honest.'

North snorted softly as he twisted off the cap, his eyes darting toward the teenager. 'Well, make sense.'

Allowing the cap to slip to the floor, North softly sat down on the edge of the spirit's cot, a wary frown planting itself on the guardian of wonder as he eyed the drowsy spirit.

'Jack, I will not lie to you, this is going to hurt.'

Jack's fidgeting body went still and stiffened at the great Santa's honest tone.

'How much?' Jack whispered quietly.

North paused and bit his lip, a lot, but will make you feel better.'

Jack was silent for a moment as he lie motionless on the cot, his body stopped moving to the point that North questioned if the teenager had stopped breathing.

'Just, do it.' Jack sighed with a slight shake before he struggled to remove his white t-shirt. North lent a large hand and pulled the fabric off the teen, exposing the jagged slash along the top of Jack's swollen red shoulder, a faint tinge of yellow circled the vile red slash, signs of both healing and disease. Jack's eyes shot wide as he noticed the reflection of his multicoloured blemished limb, his pupils shrinking in shock as his body rose and fell, a stretching feeling admitting from the bruised opening.

'That's my cut?' The spirit mumbled in shock.

North gave a solemn nod as he poured a half cup of rubbing alcohol onto a clean rag, 'it's healing, but not pretty.'

Jack remained locked on the sight of his shoulder, unable to believe he wasn't feeling more pain.

'You ready?' North asked softly, about to place the wet rag across the sore wound. Jack momentarily hesitated, but with a nervous sigh agreed and bit his lip hard. North watched the teenager's face twist as the wet rag burned into his wounded flesh. Jack's lanky limbs became stiff as he clenched the bedding of his cot, sweat permeating from his wrinkled forehead. North continued to rub the rage along the open wounds until the area shined with a liquid covering, satisfied North pulled away and allowed the younger guardian to catch his breath.

'All done, I'll wrap new bandage and you should be good.'

Jack gave another exhausted nod and shivered, 'when will I... not be like this?'

North placed a soft layer of gauze across Jack's wound, 'time will tell Jack, it will be alright.'

Jack's eyes flickered worriedly as north finished covering his slash, his head turning swiftly towards the giant.

'Any updates on Jamie?'

North shook his head handing the teen his white pj shirt,' nothing yet.'

Frowning, Jack stared at his shirt blankly, before eventually slipping it over his head. North momentarily reached forward to assist the woozy guardian, but said guardian slipped on the garment quickly, as if in reaction to North's attempted assistance.

The guardian of wonder slowly sat up from his seat and motioned towards the door, 'I'll go see if there any news.'

North watched the teenager carefully as he gave a soft nod of acknowledgement before fading back into his cot. North softly closed the doors of the infirmary, a worried frown still prevalent on his angled face. Hastily the largely formed guardian strutted towards the main entrance hall in front of the glittering globe. Upon arrival, North was immediately met with the large rabbit who had practically crashed into his chest. North let out a faint gasp,'bunny! What..'

'We got a problem mate, Sandy needs backup.'

Noting the stiff fur on the back of the rabbit's neck North felt his stomach drop, with a sinking heart the guardian spotted the swirling miniature aircraft flying around the globe, its banner of SOS flaring urgently behind it.

'I'll help him, you keep watch'in Jack.'

North nodded and Bunny swiftly tapped his foot, summoning a large black hole underneath his right leg. Without a word, the concerned rabbit dissipated into the blackness of his burrow hole which shut promptly after entry. North stared at the spot where the hole had

been, his troubled mind wondering what was going on at the Burgess hospital.

Rocky remained glued to his fake leather couch, seated sitting up, his back slightly bent as he leaned forward towards the TV. The act of Rocky being sewn into the couch was not unusual, but his reasoning was. Video games remained untouched by his Playstation 3 as the child watched the news broadcast vigilantly, occasionally checking his phone for any new articles on his friend. So far he had gathered minimal news about the whole ordeal, it seemed like the media had kept very quiet on the details. Rocky grunted, refreshing the Burgess news website and finding the same articles from minutes ago. With a frustrated sigh, Rocky tossed his phone beside him and stared up at the ceiling as he continued to ignore his math homework, his attention focused on the melodic ticking of the old-fashioned clock.

'Hey.'

Rocky remained still in his same posture, barely reacting to the familiar presence.

'Hey.' He replied quietly.

The presence of his twin brother sat down softly at the edge of the couch, a much quieter entrance compared to his usual leaps. Both were quiet for a couple minutes, an eerie silence building between the siblings as they waited for the other to bring good news. Rocky broke first as his eyes darted to his twin, 'anyone say anything?'

Rocky frowned, noting the strange amount of shyness and distance in his usually wild and carefree younger twin.

Tommy shook his head softly and turned to face Rocky, 'nothing new, all the parents got a school email about it recently, but everything in it we already know.'

Rocky leaned forward and slid closer to his brother, 'anything from Tina or Nate?'

'Nate messaged me a little while ago, he said Tina's still pretty upset, he was wondering if we had heard anything.'

'I take it nothing from Cupcake?'

'Not a word.'

'Jack?'

'Nope.'

'Other guardians, any?'

'Zip.'

Rocky's brow furrowed, 'that's so weird we haven't heard of anything from Jack.'

Tommy nodded, 'do you think he's with Jamie?'

'I really don't know, but he wouldn't leave us in the lurch like this unless it was important.' Rocky bit his lip and sighed.

'Anything on the news?' Tommy asked softly.

Rocky shook his head, 'nothing, same stuff as before. Jamie's in hospital, those guys have been caught and are being interviewed.'

Tommy looked up towards his taller brother, 'maybe we can ask mom and dad to message Miss Bennett?'

Rocky shrugged and gave Tommy an unsure expression, 'they don't want to bother her, remember? They said she's going through enough.'

'Aren't we too?' Tommy exclaimed before rubbing his face with his hands. Rocky gazed at his brother sadly, before returning his gaze back to the TV screen, the upbeat music of the weather forecast humming deafly in the sombre air.

'Hey Rocky.. 'Tommy whispered finally looking up from his hands, eyes shifting to his knees. 'I'm sorry I didn't believe you when you first mentioned the whole kidnapping thing, I really didn't think you'd be right.'

Tommy gazed at the floor shamefully, his dark brown eyes a sad half-mask. Rocky's eyes widened in surprise, 'Dude, it's okay, it's not your fault.'

Tommy peered back up into the taller boy's face, 'How did you know?'

Rocky blinked and stuttered, 'I... I didn't know, it was more of a hunch.'

The younger sibling's eyes drifted back to the floor, his foot nervously tracing the outline of the side of the couch. Rocky sighed and joined his brother's gaze on the chestnut wood floor, his mind flashing back to the last moments he had seen his friend charging into the woods. Another silence bloomed between them until Tommy broke it.

'Are things ever going to be the same after this?' Tommy whispered.

Rocky couldn't tell if Tommy was asking him or not, regardless, all Rocky could do to respond was to put an arm around his brother's shoulders.

Heart Attack

Hello,

I meant to have this out by Christmas but stuff happened, big surprise. Thank you for all your patience, I appreciate those who show interest in this work. I'm sorry if this chapter is a little underwhelming, I was going through some stuff writing this.

See you all soon.

Chapter 8 - Heart Attack

As Bunny launched himself forward down his rabbit hole, he found his thoughts drifting once more to the last time he had seen Jamie. The way the boy had sobbed and fought the very people attempting to lead him to safety had made the rabbit's hair stand on end. Seeing the pure desperation and panic in that boy's battered face was enough to make the infuriated rabbit lose his mind with fury, especially considering his worries had been confirmed by Jack upon his recent awakening. The rabbit couldn't help but feel a certain amount of anger towards Jack for his careless launch into danger, not to mention the added stress he had unintentionally caused for the already traumatised child. Despite his frustration towards the youngest guardian, Bunny couldn't help but feel guilt as he stewed over his conversation with Jack. Regardless of Jack's hasty mistakes, he still saved Jamie. The rabbit had to admit that Jack was a new guardian and still inexperienced, and besides, none of them were prepared for the terrible events that occurred that day. As the thundering footsteps of bunny's feet slapped upon the dirt tunnel path, bunny's mind wandered to the years he had known of Jack's existence. The long winter of 1968 had not been the best introduction after years of stretched acquaintances, but whose fault had that been?

A noiseless dark hole appeared on the ceiling of the tunnel. Bunny sped towards the dark opening as his frenzied mind trailed back to Tooth's accusations against him; he had never seen her so upset.

When Bunny surfaced in the children's ward of the Burgess hospital, he was struck by the sound of crying coming from up the large hospital corridor. Bunny's ivy-green eyes narrowed as he listened carefully to the frightened cries, his ears twitching as he leapt out of the rabbit hole. Bunny's eyes widen in recognition as he rushes up the hospital corridor, his eyes scanning for the source of the familiar, frightening sounds. As the rabbit skidded to a halt in front of the second hospital ward door, his eyes spotted a familiar golden form hovering over a hospital bed, and a strange nervousness panged his urgently beating heart. Rushing through the entrance, Bunny nearly tripped in shock as he gazed in horror at the sight above the sandman. Bunny found himself quivering, which he had never done before, as he froze to the spot, unable to believe the horrific sight before him. Jamie's frantic squealing and sobbing wound around the hospital room as a small pack of frightened doctors crowded around his flailing body. Along with the doctors was a terrified brunette with familiar coffee-brown eyes, aiding the frantic doctors who held her unconscious son. Above the crowd of adults, the tired form of the guardian of dreams was using his weapons on a mass of crimson and black sand, slicing and stabbing the mass of exploding sickly colors. Bleeding out of the child's head were nightmares of black and red, creating the most dramatic and scarring display. The visions of red illustrated the traumatic memories of the past day, accompanied by Jamie's small red form and his captors' shady silhouettes. As the red form of one of the captors held out a knife to the running child, rushing through the dark black woods, the black wiring sand seemed to add in little details to help the remained in a terrified trance as he watched the horror film-like dream, The rabbit was snapped back to reality as the sound of Sandy's whips pierced the air, ripping the traumatic dream into shreds. Bunny's eyes flicked to Sandy, who remained trained on the mass of the molten dream hovering above the child's head. Bunny's eyes narrowed as he stood back and shot a careful boomerang into the cloud, allowing the sand to dissipate

from the air. Jamie let out an exhausted gasp each time the mass of sand was broken, his unconscious body writhing less and less with each attack.

"He seems to be calming down now,' the doctors chattered.

The guardians continued to fight the spinning mass of red and black, until Sandy slashed the remaining sand from the air.

Jamie's rushing breathing seemed to return to normal as he let out a gargled gasp and returned to his dreamless sleep. As the doctors continued to stabilise the unconscious child, Bunny shoved his boomerang away and walked up to the bent-over Sandy.

"Was that pitch?" Bunny asked quickly, his eyes narrowing.

As Bunny came closer, he noticed Sandy was bent over and gasping noiselessly with his pointed hair displaced. Bunny came to a halt, allowing the guardian to catch his breath before continuing to ask questions.

"What's going on, Mate?"

Sandy slowly raised his head, a terrified, ghostly expression on his face.

After taking a few moments to catch his breath, Sandy began to explain the situation with a mass of golden pictures displayed above his head. Bunny glanced between the small guardian and the child resting in bed, a slow flame of fury building in his eyes. "So you're telling me that pitch is giving this kid nightmares, and you've been battling them for hours?"

Sandy gave an urgent nod before exposing the red stains of sand he had managed to collect. Bunny's ears dipped, and he gave a saddening sigh that mixed with his furious expression.

"Trauma dreams, eh?" Not surprised.'

Sandy nodded and waved bunny over towards Jamie. The rabbit stepped over to the bedside, his eyes trailing down Jamie's twitching body and twisted expression. The guardian's eyes softened as he noticed the faint lines of tears along Jamie's face. Bunny's attention was flipped to Sandy's waving movements with his robed arms, conducting the calming flows of golden sand around the child's head.

"Nice idea," Bunny sighed softly, "the kid could use..."

Bunny's words were stolen when the swirls of golden sand dissipated into nothingness the moment it made contact with the child's heated forehead.

Both guardians stared in surprise as Sandy attempted to conduct another dream, and once again achieved the same result.

'What..?'

Sandy panicked and repeated the same action over and over again.

Bunny's breath shuddered in his chest as he watched the display, his wide pupils fixated on Jamie's unchanging expression.

"Has this ever happened before?" Bunny asked.

Sandy shivered as he shook his head, his eyes as perplexed as the rabbit's.

Bunny's speeding breath prevailed no matter how he attempted to stifle his chest. Jolting upward, the rabbit attempted to mask his panic as he nervously watched Sandy freeze. For a moment, Bunny stopped and hesitated, his mind toying with the idea of summoning a rabbit hole for the north pole.

Suddenly, a mass of black and red sand began to leak from Jamie's crown, drowning out the child under the covers' frantic cries.

The doctors, who had momentarily turned away, came rushing back to the screaming child as he writhed in his bed. Bunny snatched his

boomerang and pushed away his shock, then steadied himself for another battle. As the unaware doctors and Meghan steadied Jamie's wailing body, the guardians fought above their heads, battling the mix of nightmare and trauma sand.

Meanwhile

Jack had fallen into a troubled sleep with the help of North's care; it seemed to be the only way the guardian could put the younger party's mind to rest. While cleaning up supplies and placing a cold ice pack on the guardian's chest, North watched solemnly as he noticed the faint twitching in the guardian's barely resting body. Placing a comforting hand through the guardian's hair, North pulled away with a sigh and turned to leave the infirmary. In a stiff snap, the large Russian man confronted the yeti beside him after closing the door. "Let Jack rest. Tell me if he wakes up."

The yeti gargled in understanding as he entered the infirmary room, quietly closing the large door. As the yeti began to shut the entrance, North's anxious eyes snuck another glance at the unconscious teen, still twitching uncomfortably in his bed. As the door shut, North marched through his usually busy workshop, his mind pushing aside his concerns as he came to his private study. Amidst his cluttered room of books, tools, and knickknacks, a hoodie had been placed along his work seat, folded ever so carefully by one of the yetis. North unzipped the hoodie from its envelope-like fold, revealing the gleaming shades of feathered frost he'd grown accustomed to seeing on the familiar piece of scanned the blue fabric, thankful that the blood had been washed out of the dark fabric, leaving only a fairly large hole to be, the giant sat down and opened one of his messy drawers, swiftly plucking a needle and a navy blue bob of thread from his organised mess despite not looking once. Leaning back with a sigh, North began to stitch the torn fabric's seams, his thoughts wandering to Bunny and Sandy as he awaited word from their growing had taken longer than expected for North to sew the rip, partly due to his wandering thoughts on Jamie's condition and what had caused the faithful Sandy to fire an SOS. Flickering the

needle in and out between stitches, North pricked his finger more than a handful of times, but he was unsure just how many since the coldness of the fabric had somewhat numbed his fingers. Time passed and Jack's hoodie was good as new. For a small moment, North felt a shred of relief as he admired his small accomplishment, but despite the faint glimmer of hope, his guilty mind still pressed back into the depths of his memories as he tried to remember the first time he had ever heard the name Jack Frost.

There was a sudden loud thud as North was jolted from his thoughts, spinning his head to face the noise. Outside his office door, the Russian could hear the unmistakable sounds of a frustrated accent cursing fanatically. Sensing the urgency in the other guardians' tone, North bolted to the door and opened it with a sharp snap, allowing a frazzled and furious pooka to rush into the room.

'That good for noth'in blimey bastard!' As he skidded to a halt in front of the giant bearded man, the gray-blue rabbit yelled.

"That gobshite has gone too far; how dare he!"

Before North could speak, the furious eyes of Bunny swung to face the giant, and North could already see some faint tears in the pooka's disturbed face.

"North, it's pitch, he's taunting Jamie, the poor kid can't sleep without nightmares from that bastard!"

North's concern and confusion were dismissed to rage. "Pitch is back?"

"He's somehow gotten the kid nightmares along with these trauma dreams he's already had," Bunny paced, "the kid gets them every five minutes, and he'd probably have them more if Sandy wasn't there."

North's breath caught in his throat as the words slipped past Bunny's lips, his heart sinking in his great chest.

"Trauma dreams?" "Oh, St. Corprecorns..."

Bunny sighed and shook his head, putting his face in his hands.

"That kid is being tortured by pitch, and Sandy can't seem to get rid of him no matter how hard he tries. "

Bunny peered upward, his eyes growing dark as he recounted everything he had seen. 'NO one can wake Jamie up, he's been unconscious since he got there, the doctors have been giv'in him mild sedatives when he freaks out during some of his dreams but it apparently shouldn't be keeping him unconscious for this long!'

Bunny sank to the floor, his nostrils flaring as he dragged his claws through his fur.

North's icy eyes fumed with pure contempt as he stood rigidly gazing out into the freezing wind that rattled his window pane.

"Is there any chance Pitch is involved in everything?"

Bunny removed his paw from his face and raised an inquisitive eyebrow. 'Whut do ya mean?'

"The kidnappers, the abduction, everything!" North bellowed as he turned his infuriated expression toward the rabbit before him. Hearing his own thundering voice, North flinched and sighed before putting his agitated hands to his sides. Bunny stepped back from North's furious display but seemed rather unphased, as his eyes seemed to reflect a similar suspicion. Shaking his head, Bunny muttered under his breath, "It's a long stretch North, but not impossible. The question would be how he'd accomplish this..'

North glared down at his desk, the images of Jamie's sobbing face and terrified cries from the crime scene echoing from inside his enraged mind.

'It certainly not question of why..' The great Santa growled under his breath.

Bunny frowned,'he'd probably want to get back at Jack, no better way of do'in that though Jamie.'

North gave a solemn nod and sighed, "If that is case."

Bunny's furious expression looked upward from his previous crooked view of the floor, coming to view North's angered posture, "How is Jack?"

"He went back to sleep a while ago; I had to medicate him so he would." He's still healing.

There was a silence as both guardians pondered the same question.

"Should we tell him?" North muttered softly.

Bunny gave a frustrated sigh and shook his head. "Does he need to know? Can't we wait... we don't want another situation where he rushes into somethang blindly again."

North placed a thoughtful hand under his chin and remained silent while Bunny continued to mutter rhetorically to the thoughtful guardian.

'How did Jamie seem when you saw him, health wise..?'

Bunny thought for a moment, and the longer it took the pooka to answer, the more North felt his worry grow.

'Not well.' Bunny hesitatingly answered with a sad sigh, his eyes catching sight of the picture he had left tucked into his belt. "It's not life-threatening, but he's pretty sick, exhausted from the dreams.'

North rubbed his beard softly and said, "Maybe there is something Jack can do?'

Bunny swiftly shook his head, saying, "Jack needs to rest too, North; there's nothing he can do right now."

'I know, but I know Jack would like to see Jamie if he's dealing with pitch.' North argued.

The rabbit bounded closer to North and snorted, 'look.'

The Aussie rabbit sighed and let his shoulders sink. He's got to worry bout himself right now. Anyway, Sandy and I are on it, and it appears to be keeping the dreams at bay as long as we are both doctors will help Jamie outta this.'

"Besides," muttered the rabbit, "I think Jack has done enough."

North felt his fist tighten in reaction to the final words but remained silent. "As the rabbit turned to leave, North sternly called his name, causing the tall rabbit to look over his shoulder."

"You should talk to Jack when he wakes up again."

Bunny silently acknowledged the statement and nodded before conjuring up a large rabbit hole in front of his hopping in, the guardian of hope called to North, "I'll update you if anything changes."

North nodded as he watched the rabbit go.

Meanwhile

Tina cried quietly on her bed, hidden under the covers from the prying eyes of her parents and friends, allowing the heavy guilt she had collected to drain off her pained back with each quiet whimper she produced. Burying her fiery skin into the folds of her soft blankets, Tina allowed the tears to soak the black fabric and chill the lava-hot beads that burned her salty cheeks. The girl ignored the soft buzzes of her flip phone, the painful reminder that she could not hide entirely from others forever. Tina remained curled in her bed, unable

to cry any longer, her ivy-green eyes fixed on the nothingness of her ceiling. The unkempt and wrinkled bed was a small blemish compared to the rest of the organised room. The computer in the corner of the pale blue space had collected an unusual amount of dust and remained remarkably untouched for the past two days. Tina rubbed her red-tinged eyes and peered out her side window. Her heart fluttered excitedly for a short moment when she thought she saw the familiar glint of feathered frost sparkle on the glass. Bolting upward, Tina peered anxiously at the window pane, her eyes wide with enthusiasm. Her flickers of hope were doused when she discovered nothing but a trick of light dancing across her window, cruelly intimidating a familiar cold spark. Tina's eyes returned to their sorrowful half mask as she slid back into the isolation of her covers, somehow feeling more depleted than she did prior to the interruption. With all her might, Tina attempted to steer her thoughts away from Jamie Bennett, but despite her guilty pleas, the familiar accusing coffee-brown eyes remained stamped in the folds of her memory. Tina had never been more scared in her life than when being interviewed by the police at the station. Despite her parents' reassurances and Nate's presence, she had stuttered on every word of her retelling. Tina remembered being so scared when she sat in that leather chair; sweat from her palms had soaked small outlines into the light brown material. After the nerve-wracking interview, the small redhead avoided seeing the amber alerts for her friend; her parents had carefully filled her in on the news being shared. Tina had come close to searching for her friend's name in the local news over the days, but had lost her nerve and closed out of the search engine, returning to the ignorant darkness of her bedroom. Tina gazed at the wall next to her in a timeless stance, her ivy-green eyes clouding over as those accusing coffee-brown orbs returned. Tina remained in this state for a number of minutes before another interruption occurred, this time in the form of a gentle tap at her window. Tina's eyes opened wide and her breathing stilled, her mind not believing the sound her ears might have made up. After a few moments, the kind tap returned with a firmer knock, causing Tina to spring from her bed.

'JACK?' The girl exclaimed swiftly, turning to the window with such force that it nearly caused her whiplash. When she discovered the absence of Jack Frost but the unexpected presence of a multicoloured feathered fairy, the girl's eyes widened even more. Darting to the window, Tina grasped the latches and lifted, allowing the cool sensation of the outdoors to greet her pale face.

"Tooth fairy? What are you doing here?"

Tooth gave a comforting smile and fluttered cautiously in front of the girl's second-story window. With a soft smile, Tooth responded, "I was wondering how you were, Tina. I was in the area..sooo I thought I'd say hello."

The guardian's smile faltered as her eyes traced the tear stains along Tina's freckled face. The little girl's cheeks flushed red in acknowledgement of the fairy's sudden concern, and she swiftly wiped a dry hand across her cheek.

"Can I come in for a moment?" Tooth asked politely.

Tina nodded and stepped back, allowing the feathered form to slip through the small opening. Tooth hovered in the centre of Tina's small bedroom, her colourful feathers standing out from the darker shades of clothing and furniture occupying the organised space. The fairy's violet eyes seemed to admire the astrology posters lining the walls of the dark room before she turned her attention back to the sheepish form below.

"You're into space, I see." Tooth smiled.

Tina rubbed her neck softly as her dull-lit eyes scanned the posters, bringing back faint memories from her time at the science museum with her friends.

'Yeah.'

Tooth gazed at the Big Dipper poster admiringly as she continued to float in the air.

"I love hearing stories behind each constellation; humans always have such unique stories behind everything."

The little girl watched the fairy gaze into the multicoloured picture of the Milky Way for a few moments, until the fairy finally turned back to look at Tina once more. Tina nervously met the motherly guardian's warm eyes as she floated downward to a welcoming sitting position upon the girl's unmade bed.

"Hey, how are you doing, Tina?"

Despite the obvious care in the fairy's tone, Tina still flinched at the question and sighed while gripping her arm to her chest. Unable to find any words to respond, Tina's head hung shamefully as she fought her dry, quivering lips. Tooth's comforting smile faded to concern as she caught the shiny twinkle of a tear slipping down Tina's cheek.

"It's so difficult..." Tina whimpered, still gazing at the floor, "This all feels like it's my fault."

Boney shoulders hidden by a purple hoodie shook as Tina's quiet crying became more apparent. Tooth sat motionless at the edge of the girl's bed, her petite hands reaching slowly towards the little girl.

"Cupcake was right; if it wasn't for me, Jamie would never have been kidnapped."

Tooth's distraught eyes flooded with sadness as her hand finally completed its journey and landed softly on the tip of the girl's shoulder.

Tina had been struck by the weightlessness of the touch; if circumstances were different, she could have easily mistaken the interaction for a butterfly landing on her arm. Feeling the soft

embrace, Tina broke down more and allowed Tooth's hand to guide her to the fairy's feathered embrace. Tina cried for a few moments, allowing her fiery guilt to slip from the corners of her pained eyes and slide from her insides to the cold exterior of the outside world. The presence of her tooth's rounded chin on her head added an eerie dashavoo to that dreaded day, causing the girl to cry even harder into the guardian's small chest.

"Sweetie, what did cupcake say to you?" The fairy asked worriedly.

'She brought up that ja..Jamie always gets picked on when he's alone at school, and we should have picked a game where no one wa..was.. alone.'" Tina sniffed between gasps.

Tooth body stiffened, a strike of guilt slashing her already wounded heart as she wondered how long the girl in her embrace had suffered with the unbearable blame.

"Tina, Cupcake was just upset; she was scared just like you; she didn't mean that. These situations are so hard to understand, even for adults, they blame things and people that don't deserve the blame because they're scared. ' Tooth whispered, giving the thin girl another soft squeeze.

Tina's shaking hands became frustrated fists as she vigorously shook her head in the fairy's chest."No, you don't get it. I've been avoiding him; I abandoned him."

Tooth gazed downward in confusion at the young girl, asking, "What do you mean by that, Tina?"

Tina's fist tightened somehow more as she peered up to face the tooth fairy's troubled expression, her eyes red.

"I have barely left my room since everything happened; I don't have the courage to even look up Jamie's name in the news." Angry tears continued to spark in the child's eyes while she rubbed them away feverishly. "I haven't talked to anyone except Nate, and even then I

don't feel comfortable. I'm so cowardly, I'm acting like I don't even care!'

Tina bawled into the warm chest of the elder female, allowing the steady heartbeat of the guardian to eventually soothe her frantic sobbing. A soft hand brushed through the velvety red hairs along Tina's temple; the child quivered and buried her face into the fairy's chest.

"Tina, sweetie, you are not a coward, nor are you acting like you don't care about Jamie, not in the slightest.'

Tina refused to meet the guardian's gaze as she allowed the final wave of tears to slip and dry down her burning cheeks, minutes passed like hours as the little girl finally gathered enough courage to peek upward, half expecting to see the judgmental stare she deeply feared. The girl was greeted by the fiery expression of the dedicated guardian, the fairy's determined expression softened slightly upon noticing Tina's nervous face.

"Tina, me, and the other guardians will make sure Jamie is okay."

Tooth stroked the girl's cheek with a small, comforting hand.

"None of this is your fault, Tina, none of it."

Tina's sad eyes met the kind purple orbs of the other party, and already the girl could feel the apparent distrust present on her freckled face. Tooth placed another soft hand upon the other shoulder of the girl and asked, "Do your parents know about what Cupcake said to you?"

The girl shook her head, while tooth gave a caring smile.

"I know it's hard, but I think it would really help if you went to them and talked about it, sweetie."

Tina blinked her wide eyes as Tooth gave a faint encouraging smile, before she then slowly pulled her hands from the girl's shoulders.

"I'm sorry, Tina; I have to go and check on the others."

Tina nodded slowly as tooth lifted from her position and began to flutter from the bed to the widow, Tina following a few steps behind. Lifting the white wooden frame, Tina allowed tooth to slip into the morning light. The fairy turned to the girl once more and gave the child a quick side hug from the small opening, saying, "Remember what I told you, okay, sweetie."

Tina nodded silently and hugged the guardian back. After a brief moment, tooth pulled away, and she began to flutter into the sky before coming to a sudden halt, her feathers jolting forward slightly. Tina blinked in surprise at the guardian's pause in flight, her eyes tracing the tensed muscle lines that popped from her slender form. After a few moments, the fairy passed another glance backward, allowing the girl to spot the sad expression shadowed in her guilty orbs.

"Tina, you're not alone, okay? I'm here for you."

The girl had expected the fairy to fly off but the guardian remained present as she hovered in midair expecting a response. After noticing she had not left, Tina gave a swift nod of promise, which the fairy returned with a delicate, sad smile.

"Talk to you soon, Tina. You'll hear from Jack soon."

The guardian flew off into the pink sky with a rush of fluttering wings, becoming nothing but a colourful speck as she darted past the apartments and homes of the town. Tina watched breathlessly from her window even after she was gone from view. As a chilly wind snapped her from her trance, Tina carefully shut the window, and for the first time in days, she went downstairs to catch the morning news.

Later

No matter what the doctors did, nothing seemed to help Jamie out of his strange, coma-like state, leaving the medical staff puzzled and worried. Frequent tests had been done on the unconscious boy as he rested, none of which had answered why the child remained unconscious. During that time, Jamie's mind was subjected to frequent nightmares, many of which caused the boy to violently vocalize while squirming and fighting the people around him. Bunny and Sandy fought fiercely against the storms of black and red with Sandy being the main powerful catalyst, keeping the child's night terrors to a minimum. Despite everyone's efforts, Jamie bore the scars of his restless sleep, as his skin had turned clammy and red, a burning fever embedded in his battered body. Bunny's fur remained frazzled as he stared blankly into the tile hospital floor, his fur standing half-erect as he awaited yet another wave of guardian of hope had given up attempting to paint eggs to pass the time, unable to find the mental capacity to do anything other than wait. In the hospital bed next to the boy, a female form lay facing the bed next to her, the dark bags under her eyes becoming a purpley black. Bunny glanced at the woman for a moment as he watched the woman's eyes start to close, her heavy eyelids rapidly flickering like a butterfly's fluttering wings. Bunny frowned and turned his troubled eyes to the equally exhausted sandman, who at the moment seemed like he was about to fall asleep once more. With a sigh, Bunny stood up and gave the small guardian a firm tap with his large hand, stirring the tired sand guardian from his purgatory state.

"Hey, Sandy, mate, you're tired; why don't you rest and let me get to the north or something?"

Sandy shook his head vigorously as he allowed the sleepy sand to fall from his eyes, a determined, fiery glow extinguishing the exhaustion stinging his small, rounded face. With a number of flashing images, many of them related to the nightmare king. Bunny scoffed in frustrated agreement: 'I suppose that would be best, but

I'm pretty sure I can handle the dang nightmare sand on my own for a little while.'

The sandman shook his head in disapproval before both guardian's heads snapped towards the sound of faint whimpering.

Jamie's pained face emitted tiny cries of exhausted fear as he squirmed slightly in his hospital cot. Bunny felt the hair on the back of his neck tense as Jamie's quiet whimpers petered off into silence once more, another false alarm.

Sandy emitted a relieved sigh, before once again attempting to create a dream around Jamie's crown, once again failing, not to his surprise.

Bunny let out a tired sigh, The nightmares had been easy to fight with two guardians for the most part, but they were always there and always growing stronger. Bunny pondered his last conversation with North and whether he should call on more help. Before the guardian could question whether he had underestimated Pitch's power, a sudden presence erupted into the room as the colourful tooth sped to an instant stop in front of the hospital bed. Bunny jumped in shock while Sandy's oddly depressed aura lightened as he grinned at the sight of the visitor.

Bunny's heart skipped a few beats before he forced the hair on his neck to go down, as he anxiously avoided the fairy's gaze.

"Hey guys, I'm here to help. Is there anything I can do?"

Tooth's voice faltered as she peered over Jamie's pale body, the faint glimpses of positivity slipping from her pale face. Bunny's look of shock dissipated into mutual sadness.

"Poor ankle biter has been through a lot of nightmares."

Sandy nodded gravely, his darkened Arora appearing once more.

Bunny watched Tooth's devastated eyes harden and tear away from the beaten boy as a much more angry expression clouded her face.

'Nightmares?' Her tone was dark, but Bunny could hear the squeak of disbelieving horror in her voice.

'You..mean... pitch is..'

Sandy nodded and quickly displayed a series of images over his head, many relating to the nightmare king. After some clarification from Bunny, Tooth turned back to stare worriedly at the child beside them, her pupils tracing the sweat beading from the injured boy's forehead.

"Pitch has outdone himself; I never thought he'd stoop this low."

Bunny snorted, "I'm not."

Bunny's fist tightened at Tooth's words, and the way she turned her head to face the sleep-deprived mother made the rabbit wonder if she was inverting her body to avoid his gaze.

"That poor kid, he's been through enough."

Bunny dipped his head in agreement.

There was a brief silence as everyone took turns eyeing the floor and circling back to watch Jamie's steady but shaky breathing.

"Maybe we should get Jack." Tooth whispered.

Bunny visually cringed at the thought as he shook his head. "This ain't the time."

"Maybe he could help, Bunny; Jamie really doesn't look well."

Sandy gave a slow nod as he failed once again to produce a dream around Jamie's crown.

Bunny snorted as he tossed his boomerang nervously from hand to hand.

Before the pooka could speak, everyone was alerted to an oncoming storm as Jamie emitted a weak cry and wiggled feebly in his hospital cot. The child's screech was remarkably less energetic and quiet; his energy had been dwindling for the past few hours, but this was remarkably so. A mass of red and black exploded from the child's temple, filling the entire room with a storm of waspy sand.

'Crikey!' Bunny yelled in surprise as he stumbled to avoid the whip's sting like fluttered anxiously, flickering in the air as she desperately searched for the core of the wild mass of sand.

'Careful! Don't hit Jamie!' As he watched a tooth slash through the waspy red and black, Bunny swiftly began to whip the top of the sand, while Bunny threw his coordinated boomerangs with powerful lunges. The invasion of trauma and nightmare sand was worse than what Bunny had seen, and from the few glimpses of Sandy's face he had captured, it was clear he was not alone.

A short cry rang out, one that did not belong to Jamie. A tooth was thrown to the ground with a hard thud next to Bunny, the guardian of memories, emitting a pained hiss as she slowly came to her knees. A faint scratch from the sharp wisps of sand tainted her pale cheek. Instinctively, Bunny offered his hand and helped the smaller guardian up with a firm but gentle pull. Bunny sent another boomerang into the mass of red and black, but let out a grunt of pain as he felt a slash on his arm appear after a stinging whip of black sand cut his forearm. Grimacing, the guardian defiantly searched for the small dream guardian, his pupils wide.

"Sandy! Where are you?!"

The swirling mass of sand swung faster and faster around the guardians, displaying the haunting nightmares of the traumatized child.

In Jamie's dream

It had become expected for Jamie to dream, he often did so every night, but even more so after the battle with Pitch. It had been a long time since he had simply slept a vacant, timeless sleep devoid of dreams. What would normally be a minor disappointment was a massive relief; the boy wanted his mind to go blank, absent, lost in the world of nothingness more than anything else. The nightmares were constant and aggressive, clawing and gouging into Jamie's wounded mind with horrific trauma. The nightmares would insert themselves into the child's spinning mind, lasting for what seemed like hours until suddenly being cut short to blackness, as if someone had snipped the end price of film on a movie reel. For a while, Jamie's subconscious took refuge in the dark, allowing himself to preserve what little sanity and energy he had left. For the longest time, Jamie remained in the dark, waiting anxiously for his peace to end and for yet another sudden nightmare to erupt and shatter his oasis. As time passed without interruption, the boy's subconscious made a risky move, the boy allowed himself to breathe and calm, his heart still pounding from his unending predicament. There was a short calm during which the boy pretended to sleep within his troubled mind as he felt his body calm. Within a fraction of a second, the boy was transported to another hideous nightmare over which he had no control, crashing into the sharp bracken of creepy, never-ending woods, horribly familiar voices calling out from behind him.

"He went this way!" Come on!"

Jamie's fists clawed into the ground as he frantically scrambled to his feet, his heartbeat deafening his eardrums. Weezing, the brunette began to run wildly through the woods, seeking an escape that did not exist. Jamie's cheeks burned from the salt as he gasped for air, nearly tripping over logs as he shook his head back and forth, looking for the unembodied, cruel voices that haunted the eerie wood. The child yelped as he felt his feet make contact with a rotting log, causing the dazed child to crash to the cold ground in a fearful heap. The voices became louder and more guttural as Jamie

squirmed to stand back up, ignoring the ripples of chronic pain from his aching joints.

"I just saw him this way!"

Jamie stifled a sob as he ran further into the shaded woods, limping slightly as he crashed through the thorny bracken and bush.

'Is this a dream? I can't remember anymore.

The exhausted boy had felt his body become weaker with each passing dream, his fight for survival becoming more futile with each violent attack he had sustained. Jamie crashed through the woods, no longer attempting to be silent as the incoming approach of heavier footsteps followed the boy. The child released a surprised shout as he fell again, falling down upon the unforgiving surface of slippery ice, his body sliding slightly as he collapsed to the ground. Grimacing, the boy peered up and his eyes widened, his heart skipping a beat as he questioned whether what he was seeing was real or not. Before the boy was the familiar pond in which he had witnessed Jack's vow as a guardian, the one with a deep black hole in the side through which pitch had been banished to his nightmare palace. Jamie froze momentarily, his body immobilized by pure astonishment as he gazed towards the dark pit, his mind fluttering to Jack's recounting of the final battle. Sharply, Jamie felt himself being thrown against the ice and pushed to the ground, his head hitting the sleet surface with an uncanny thud. Jamie turned to see Keith, his red hair slicked with a strange emotionless intensity, holding him down on the, the boy dragged himself away from the teenager by his hands but was quickly ripped back as the teenager grabbed the boy's leg and pulled him closer, jumping onto Jamie's chest and clenching his hands around the child's feeble throat. Jamie let out a garbled scream as Keith's iron clasp tightened around his neck, his frantic clawing and squirming only causing the sadistic Keith's grip to constrict. Fighting with all his might, the exhausted boy ripped into Keith's wrists and arms with his fingernails, causing faint lines of blood to run down the teenager's arms, but to no avail as Keith clenched the fragile throat of the boy. Jamie pleaded to his captor as

his movements became weaker and his vision became darker as black and blue spots obscured his view of the now smiling figure.

"Die already..' came the agitated voice,' let me snuff you out.."

There was a blast of freezing wind as Jamie felt the pressure around his neck disappear instantly, his gasping airways now flooding with tantalizing air. Coughing, Jamie sputtered and fell backward to give himself enough distance from the attacker while allowing himself to meet the freezing force. Gasping for air, the boy looked up to see a familiar teenager in a navy blue hoodie crouched over the ice, while the incapacitated red-haired Keith lay a few feet away, knocked out by the cold 's heart exploded in his chest at the sight of the guardian of fun, tears and snot dripping as he struggled to his knees to greet the teenager before him. Jack's soft eyes remained trained on the boy as he too stumbled towards Jamie, a salty discharge forming in his welcoming eyes. Ignoring the horrible pain, Jamie rushed forward and threw himself into Jack's awaiting embrace, feeling the cold folds of fabric embrace him hurriedly. Jamie sobbed tears of exhausted joy as he burrowed into Jack's cool chest, his body heaving as he felt Jack rest his head against the side of his face. The thin frame of the immortal teen shook slightly with each breath, as if it hurt his lanky body to gasp for air.

'Jack!' The boy cried softly, his weakened body shaking. "Are you okay?"

Jamie waited impatiently for the teenager to respond before he heard a sickening wet crack that made his eyes snap open in pure horror. Not wanting to look but feeling forced to do so, the child peered upward and discovered the young guardian had the end of a black pickaxe through his shoulder. Jamie starred in pure horror at the graphic sight, his face splattered with blood as he slowly glanced upward to see the guardian's ghostly expression. Jack remained still, his face somehow paler as he gazed down in horror at the boy in his arms. Jack's eyes remained unblinking as he gargled, a faint stream of blood dripping from his mouth. Jack was ripped from Jamie's grasp and thrown into the water below, the teenager screamed in

shock and terror as he crashed into the pond's thin center, slamming through the ice and into the freezing solution.

"Jamie!" the teenager shouted as the water around his squirming body became tinged in a faint red.

"Jack!" Jamie screeched, launching forward to snag the teenager's flailing arms, his body no longer feeling pain as he rushed forward. In another sudden movement, Jamie felt himself being snatched from his run and pinned against the ice once more, his head being pushed down so he could watch his squirming friend in the cracked ice. Jamie let out a grunt of pain as he was forced to stare upward into the golden eyes of a horribly familiar dark figure who held him down with a simple foot over his heaving chest. Jamie starred in pure terror as the boogie man grinned down at him from his heightened presence, cat-like eyes gleaming with malicious joy as he admired the tears dripping down the child's cheeks. Jamie remained frozen and pale as the slim figure laughed softly and leaned closer to the boy's face, his thin lips curving into a nefarious grin.

Jamie was snapped out of his terrified trance when the drowning Jack let out another submerged shout as he tiredly splashed against the ungraspable ice sheet. Once more, seeing the pale hand disappear into the water, Jamie attempted to throw himself from Pitch's foothold and rush towards the frigid pond. As the boy rolled from the nightmare king, the boogie man simply grasped the child around the neck with a strong grey hand. The sudden force grasping the child's throat caused Jamie to sputter as he kicked toward the tall figure. Pitch's grip tightened even more as Jamie struggled for breath while pulling at pitch's surprisingly strong fear prick at his eyes once more, Jamie gasped a terrified sob as he grimaced under the nightmare king's glistening eyes, sweat beading down his forehead as his pupils shrank in pure fear. Pitch's hair was slightly more unkempt, and lines of exhaustion aged his grey skin as a crazed, malevolent grin spread, revealing his pointed teeth.

"And to think that none of this would have happened if it hadn't been for you."

Pov guardians watching dream

Upon seeing the nightmare unfold, the helpless guardians continued their useless fight with the horrible dream, expecting yet another sudden round of sobbing and screaming from Jamie, even if it was in a weaker form.

But something much worse happened: the heart monitor beside Jamie stopped, and a resounding, loud, continuous beep rang throughout the room, like the mourning ring of a church bell.

Bunny caught his boomerang in midair as he stared in shock at the horrifying mass of molten sand, his wide eyes catching glimpses of Jamie's dream among the shades of vile color. Without thinking, Bunny darted deeper into the storm of sand.

"Jamie, wake up, mate!" "Open yer eyes!"

Unaware of the guardian's battle, Meghan was awoken by the sound of the frenzied heart monitor, her cries for doctors alerting medical staff.

'No! Not now, my son!'

Bunny leaped to the child's side quicker than any of the doctors, and he proceeded to push on Jamie's chest, tears in his eyes, as he frantically attempted to stir the clinically dead child.

"No! No! No!"

Bunny breathed heavily as he felt everything go in slow motion around him, unable to hear anything except the rapid beat of his heart.

"Kid, wake up!" "Don't die on us!"

Bunny attempted to do compressions on the boy's chest but was swiftly yanked backward by Tooth, who threw the rabbit out of the way to allow more space for the doctors to do their work.

'Bunny! Let the doctors do their work! Tooth shouted between tears.

All of the guardians watched in horror as frantic doctors crowded the boy's body, all shouting wildly to each other.

Sandy stood to the side, mouth open in horror, as he watched the doctors perform CPR on the child. The agast Bunny gazed in pure horror at the horrifying sight, tears dripping down his furry cheeks as he mumbled under his breath. Tooth froze beside Bunny, her eyes wide as she watched the doctors pull out the electrical medical supplies.

'Clear!'

Through the swirling sand, an electric noise could be heard, causing all the guardians to grimace as they unblinkingly watched the procedure through wisps of sand.

Jamie's body vibrated under the powerful shocks, his limbs bouncing on the small bed.

As doctors continued to shock the boy, Bunny could only hear his racing heart as he glanced frantically around the room, fully ignoring the slashes of red sand that stung his furry skin. Wildly turning his head, the rabbit caught sight of Jamie's weeping mother being comforted by a small nurse. The guardian of hope then turned to his fellow guardians to find that Sandy had finally stopped his protective slashes towards the cloud of vile sand, frozen in a horrified stance. The faint drip of crimson dripping down Tooth's cheek caught the rabbit's eye as he peered into her awed and horrified face, his body wrenching forward in a way that suggested she was about to attack. Despite her posture, the fairy was frozen as she watched the terrible nightmare unfold, her worried eyes darting to the unconscious boy. Bunny finally turned to face the sight of Jamie convulsing from

electric shocks, his motionless body lying calmly among the frenzied medical staff.

'Bunny!'

The guardian felt his face being forced to meet the tooth's as she grabbed him by the chest and urgently instructed him, "Go get Jack and North!"

Bunny nodded, finally out of his trance, as he conjured up a hole to the north pole.

My Guardian Angel

Hello everyone,

Hope you enjoy the next chapter, it felt really good to reunite Jack and Jamie after everything in the story so far, from here things pick up a bit more. Sort of.

Once again, thank you to all who enjoy this story, especially SC-01 Fiction. I really appreciate all of your input and support, it genuinely means the world to me.

Chapter 9 - My Guardian Angel

When Jack awoke, he found his body didn't ache nearly as much as it had when he first shut his eyes. The blackness of subconscious slowly dripped from view revealing the intricate wooden ceiling of the north pole's infirmary. Jack's eyelids fluttered as he slowly sat up, gingerly putting pressure on his wounded shoulder. A quiet garble caught Jack off guard as he glanced over to the inhabitant of the corner of the room. Phil stared back at him. Jack blinked a couple of times, registering the question before he spoke.

"Yeah, I feel better."

Jack scratched his head, relieved to see he wasn't flinching from his own touch.

In a sudden movement hot coco and gingerbread were thrust before Jack's nose. The guardain looked up to see Phil's orderly eyes dart from the drink towards him.

"Nah it's okay.."

The yeti cut Jack off by thrusting the plate closer to his chest.

"OH, oh okay, I guess."

Jack took the drink and cookies, holding the large mug in one hand and the plate in the other. Thinking this was the end of the transaction Jack waited for Phil to return to his seat. Phil did not move and instead continued to stare at him, his ivy-green eyes unblinking. Feeling awkward the teenager simply stared back, holding the cookies limply in one hand. Phil's eyes darted from the drink back to Jack's face. Jack slowly took a sip of his drink, his eyes not leaving Phil's in this odd staring contest. After one bite of the gingerbread, Phil seemed satisfied and returned to his seat. Jack shook his head and muttered under his breath.

Jack paused and sighed, his gaze returning to the endless swirl of snow. The window panes shook gently as the impatient current circled the infirmary, its vivacious nature turned sour. The teenager gazed out wistfully, his thoughts wandering once more to a certain believer. Once again Jack's thoughts were paused with Phil's deep garble. The teen turned around to see Phil's thoughtful eyes studying him as he waited for an answer. Jack shook his head before he responded.

"Of course, how could I not be thinking about Jamie right now?"

The corners of Phil's eyebrows were raised and his nose had a few faint wrinkles when both parties locked eyes the teenager spotted no judgment or annoyance in his expression, come to think of it Jack couldn't remember a time when Phil's face hadn't looked like that. It struck Jack that the last time the yeti had seen Jamie was when the boy had been so overjoyed to get Phil's signature in his cryptid's book that he had conducted a small interview with the yeti to learn more about his backstory and heritage. Jack had to translate for Jamie, but Phil seemed rather entertained by the situation, almost as amused as Jack had been at the time. At that moment both spirits shared the same feeling, history seemed to have repeated itself. Suddenly the infirmary room doors burst wide open, causing Phil to jolt upwards and for Jack to reach for his staff. A frazzled rabbit bolted straight for Jack barely avoiding collision as he came to a frantic halt at the side of the infirmary bed. Just behind the large

pooka was the burly North, his confident demeanor seemed demolished by a sense of pure 's heart thudded frantically at the look on the rabbit's face, bunny's noise was flaring, it seemed as though he couldn't get enough air into his lungs. Bunny's fur stood on end, his pupils the size of pins, his voice was high-pitched as he spoke.

"Jack, we need you, Jamie needs your help *NOW* ."

*****Small time skip*****

Jack's body was numb as he charged towards the porthole, his speed might have caused North to yell out a firm cautionary shout if it wasn't for the circumstances they were already in. Staff in hand, Jack leaped through the swirling vortex without a second thought. Instantaneously, Jack crashed to the other side, skidding to his knees he found himself in the hospital corridor. Bolting upward, Jack rushed down the hall, his ears acutely aware of the shouting coming from up the hall. As Jack rapidly approached the origin of the shouting, he passed a swift glance into the window of the crowded room. The wobbly teen tripped at the frame of the door, as his horrified eyes caught sight of the mass of sand swirling around the room. The molten red and black cyclone swirled viciously throughout the enclosed pale blue walls, while the sounds of tooth's shouting and Sandy's frantic whips could be heard splitting the air. Tooth's face became visible from the mass of smoky sand, Jack quickly noticed the wrinkles in her brow and the quiver in her twisted lips. Their eyes met and her pupils shrunk to the size of pinpricks while her face darkened. Jack's eyes shot from tooth to the many doctors flocking the vile sand, completely unaware of the presence of the nightmares. An eerie noise had ripped at the back of Jack's brain like fingernails on a chalkboard, leaving the back of his brain in tatters as he turned to the source of the agonizing noise. Between the slashes of gold Jack caught a few glimpses of a beeping monitor at the back of the room, a single straight red line sliced the screen in half. Jack's pupils shrunk as he stared in pure horror at the little box, the end of his fingertips trembling. All the frantic shouting, screaming, and beeping faded into a sharp buzz as Jack's heart became a thudding

drum. From the corner of his eye, Jack caught Tooth's trembling lips and pronounced a frantic apology. At that moment Jack felt his body fill with adrenalin, the familiar feeling that he had when he saw Jamie get pulled into that dreaded crimson van. North and Bunny appeared behind the boy, the pooka leaned downward and offered his paw to help Jack up, ignoring the invitation Jack bolted forward, his face a determined scowl. Jack rushed through the doctor's, ignoring the guttural punches he felt when he slipped through their mortal bodies. The teenager leaped through the hostile swarms of red and black, ignoring the painful stings they etched across his body. Jack yanked out his staff and pointed toward the center of the storm, his fingers trembling as he shot a swirl of ice toward the center of the storm. The sparkling lightning burnt a pathway through the sea of black and red straight to the hospital cot. Jack bolted forward, his eyes trained on the tuft of brown hair amongst the bleach-white pillow and blankets. The few seconds it took for the guardian to reach the unresponsive boy felt like a matter of years before he came to a hasty stop. Wasting no time, Jack crawled next to his best friend and yanked his small form into the folds of his chest. The young guardian felt panic consume him as Jamie's limp body did not react to his embrace, tears flowed from the guardian's eyes as he wrapped his arms and legs around Jamie's body, forming a protective cage-like hold against the malicious cloud of sand. It had surprised the teenager just how warm Jamie's body had become boiling, his skin being so warm it almost hurt to hold him to his chest. Instinctively, Jack placed one hand on Jamie's temple and another across his heart as he quickly proceeded to cover Jamie's overheated body in a barrier of protective frost. As the center of the storm began to grow colder, the wild slashes of sand became more wild and frantic as the heart of the storm proceeded to slowly die. Jack's lips bled as he attempted to ignore the angry slashes of waspy sand ripping at his tender skin while the heat from the vicious cycles of sand caused his temple to sweat. Regardless of the pain, Jack shut his eyes and urged the frost to spread faster across Jamie's body.

One nurse noticed the frost patterns along Jamie's neck and head, the rest of the crisscross patterns being hidden by the boy's hospital

gown.

Bunny, tooth, and North watched helplessly as the core of the sand storm began to slow, a strange new glow of icy frost permeated through the mass of black and red.

'What tha..' Bunny whispered in shock, his pupils shrinking as he watched the vile swirls of night and blood envelope desperately towards Jack and Jamie. Seeing the more panicked swirls of sand aggressively rush the pair, tooth's fist tightened and a scowl replaced her horrified awe expression. Jack grimaced as he forced his aching body to complete the barrier, as the sandstorm around the pair gradually began to lessen. A final jolt of frost jetted from Jack's hand along Jamie's heart, while Sandy slashed the sand a final time. The nightmare sand and blood-red sand collapsed, paralyzed almost instantly in the air for a few precious moments before dropping to the ground and dissipating into nothingness. Everyone remained wide-eyed and frozen as they waited for the swirls of dark crimson to reappear and strike once again. Sandy's back remained arched, whips in hand as his nervous pupils darted around the room. The other guardians peered around hastily waiting for the other shoe to drop. Jack's pupils remained narrowed as he clutched the injured child tight, his icy pupils shrinking as he felt something under the child's ear move. With lightning-quick reaction time, Jack shot an icy chill of frost along Jamie's lava-hot neck. Upon the sensation of ice-cold frost, a small black beetle dove from the child and landed on the covers below, scurrying toward the darkness of the hospital bed. Jack and Sandy reacted immediately as each sent a slash of cold and sand, both connected with the sandy black beetle killing it instantly. The small bug let out a shriek before it quickly folded into its crumpled body and dissipated into crumbs of dark sand. Jamie's labored breathing immediately lessened, and the color slowly began to return to his pale cheeks. Instantaneously, Jamie's heart monitor began to beep normally again, no longer using its alarming call. Swiftly, doctors rushed to the breathing boy's side flabbergasted by the sudden miracle that had just occurred. The head nurse peered over Jamie's neck, frantically searching for the glittering layer of frost

that had appeared over the child's neck. By the time the doctors had pulled aside the boy's shirt the frost had dissipated into tiny sparking flecks, leaving the doctors stunned. Eventually, the nurses and doctors began to reassess Jamie's condition, whilst the exhausted guardian next to the child refused to let go of his friend.

"His heart is beating normally again, Miss Bennett, surprisingly he seems to be recovering."

The brunette stared at the doctor like he had three heads, 'How is that remotely possible? His heart stopped!'

"His body temperature is gradually going back to normal, we have no explanation as of right now. Regardless, we'll have him in the ICU for the night."

Megan appeared shell-shocked as she just stared deep into the doctor's face, her eyes unblinking.

"How..? His heart stopped, I'm so confused... I don't want to sound ungrateful.."

"Meghan," doctor Newman placed a hand on her shoulder," were as confused as you right now." The doctor turned her eyes in the direction of the boy, her eyes glazed.

"This is a miracle, I don't want to promise anything but it looks positive so far. If you would like you can stay in the bed next to Jamie, but we will ask you to move if we need the room."

Meghan nodded slowly, her eyes darting toward her son.

"Did..did one of your nurses describe seeing something on Jamie?"

The doctor shook her head," I think they were simply seeing things, we sent him home, they've been up far too long."

"What was it?"

"They thought they saw frost along his neck." A noise that resembled a scoff passed the doctor's lips.

Meghan did not share the same reaction as she continued to stare at her son.

*****Small time skip*****

Time passed and slowly doctors began to leave Jamie to rest, keeping him under strict surveillance as they hoped for the best. Unbeknownst to anyone but the other guardians, Jack remained where he was, one hand still placed across Jamie's heart. Jack had barely moved at all during the tests, his back towards the door as he held Jamie close. Once the doctors began to finish up their tests, the other guardians came up to both Jack and Sandy, their eyes wide.

"Jack..how did you do that?" Tooth whispered.

"That's the second time you've asked me that question." His voice was void of its usual sarcasm.

"You don't know, do you?" North mumbled.

Jack simply shook his head.

Bunny hopped closer to the sleeping Jamie, his paw brushing away his hair to feel his forehead. Jack's muscles tense.

"He's still pretty warm," Bunny whispered.

"I'll cool him down, it's working," Jack noted dryly as he blocked bunny's paw with a cold hand along Jamie's forehead.

"Why didn't you guys tell me he was like this?" Jack growled under his breath, his mind just starting to process everything. The teenager's eyes flashed to all of them, with the exception of the floating guardian above him. A sheepish expression peered on all the guardian's faces.

"We didn't know you could help." Tooth whispered.

"You were still recovering Jack, we didn't want to disturb you. We thought we handled it."

Jack shook his head, "what was that? Nightmare sand? Pitch is involved?"

"Jack.."

"Did he do this to Jamie?" Jack's eyes fumed as if they were embers in a campfire, his arm shook slightly as he continued to hold Jamie's heated temple, a slight twitch applicable to one fighting with the urge to use a gun.

"Do you mean the dreams or the entire situation?" Bunny questioned, his voice dark.

"How would he even do that?" Jack questioned tentatively.

"I think it's a little more than possible at this rate," Bunny mumbled, 'We saw pitch appear in his nightmares before his heart stopped.'

Jack's pupils shrunk and all fury melted away to an uncomfortable fearful confusion. "Pitch tried to kill him in his dreams? How is that even possible?"

Sandy gave a shake of his head, Jack's confusion mirrored in the little spirit's. Sandy began to form a beetle silhouette while pointing a finger at Jamie.

Tooth nodded, 'he's gaining more power, these bugs are new. It probably helped him get inside Jamie's dream.'

"He wants to hurt me and Jamie, doesn't he?"

Jack's certain voice sliced through the air like a knife, the sharpness of his response triggered everyone's gazes to flicker toward him. Jack fumed as he cradled the boy in his chest, his eyes scanning

over Jamie's expressionless face. The faint bruising from Jamie's bullies had been joined by new splotches of ugly blue and purple blemishes. Jack raised his hand and softly traced the circumference of the biggest bruise, designated on the lower part of the boy's chin. Jamie flinched slightly in his rest causing Jack to hastily pull his finger away from his friend's bruise. Jack squeezed the boy apologetically before he turned to look at the other guardians, fighting desperately not to break in front of them again.

"He wants revenge, that much is clear."

The sandman floated down next to the rest of the guardians, nearly tripping as his wobbling legs made contact with the ground. Sandy's eyes narrowed as he displayed a silhouette of Jamie stopping the wave of nightmares from their battle last year.

North gave an understanding nod, his voice darkening. "He would definitely have a grudge against the both of you." North turned towards Jack, his eyes returning the same slow burn of anger the winter spirit mirrored. Jack noticed the faint twitching in North's arm as he slowly lifted his hand to his face.

"This is low, even for pitch."

"Call me naive, but I never thought he'd ever go this far." Tooth mumbled softly, her eyes scanning over Jamie's resting body.

There was a long silence as everyone peered at Jamie's form, his melodic breathing calming everyone in the room just that little bit.

Jack's brows furrowed, "what was with the red sand? Does pitch.."

"That has nothing do with pitch.." North sighed sadly, cutting off Jack mid-sentence. Jack's gaze switched to the giant, maybe it was just his exhaustion but North looked gray.

"Trauma dreams often appear after a child's been through a traumatic event, these events can haunt children to adulthood."

North sighed sadly.

"I'm not all that surprised the little tike has them," Bunny whispered.

Tooth agreed with a solemn nod, the fairy turned to Jack, expecting to see the teenager confused and horrified. To her surprise Jack had his eyes fixated on the night sky as he continued to hold Jamie tight, his pale blue orbs seemed lost in thought as he bitterly chewed on his dry lip, fighting back the resilient tears from his eyes. The battle was a lost cause as more tears began to leak from the spirit's face, quickly Jack hid his face and turned away, strangled sniffles escaping his form.

'Is there any way to stop them?' Jack whispered.

Sandy shook his head and gave a brief explanation of his attempts through several images, but finished the slideshow of golden silhouettes with an optimistic point toward Jack.

"Sandy's right, no one could fend off the nightmares and trauma sand like you did Jack, not even Sandy.." Tooth's voice had a faint vein of optimism beneath her bewildered tone. Jack brought his head up and found all the guardians staring at him with shared expressions of wonder and amazement, even bunny seemed to share a similar reaction to the surrounding group. Jack stared back at the guardians blankly as he waited for something to be said, his pale eyes trailed to North. Moments passed and Jack looked away feeling uncomfortable, "So, what should be done now?"

North placed a thoughtful hand on his chin, "we need to track pitch, he's not going to leave you or Jamie alone until we do."

Bunny nodded quickly, "That bastard can't be far, he's probably still in his nightmare palace."

Tooth gave a firm nod of agreement towards the pair before she switched her attention to Jack, her gaze softening.

"I don't think I really need to say this, Jack, but can you watch over Jamie? I think you're the only one who can help him right now."

Jack gave a swift nod. "Sandy will stay with you, Jack, he'll help if the dreams come back."

Sandy's exhausted form floated closer to Jack, despite his weariness a determined glow had spread through the small form. Jack nodded towards bunny as he peered at him from the corner of his eye. Bunny stared at Jack for a moment, he opened his mouth as if to say something, but the words never came out.

"Call us if you need us, Sandy."

*****Meanwhile*****

Pitch stared in shock and awe at what he had witnessed, his eyes wide and face contorted into a Picasso of different expressions of shock. His gray hands were still twisted in place as if Jamie's weak form was still in his grasp. He had almost been certain that he had won. The brat had been at his weakest, he struggled to fight the haunting imaginary figures of his dreams, which was nothing compared to the presence of the boogie man himself.

He should have died.

He did die.

He was sure of it.

Suddenly out of nowhere, Pitch had been thrown into darkness, and the next thing he knew he had been sent back to his nightmare palace. Immediately he attempted to reconnect to the boy's psyche, using what magic he had to take hold of his nightmare beetle once more, but the connection was gone.

The beetle was no longer there.

Pitch remained stunned, simply staring into the brick walls of his palace, his breathing rampant as he put the pieces to the situation together.

The boy wasn't dead, his light was still on the globe, glowing as brightly as ever, which could only mean his beetle had been destroyed. A strange cooling sensation burned at the nightmare's king's hands, a not-so-subtle hint of the culprit behind his untimely banishment.

It was only a question of time before the guardians would find him, and they wouldn't hold back this time. A slow smile crept across Pitch's face as he stood up, followed by the measured crazed giggle that dribbled from his mouth like sap from a tree.

"This wasn't really what I was expecting, but this makes this more interesting." Pitch chuckled to himself.

"One way or another, Jack Frost, you will pay."

****Meanwhile ****

After the guardians had left Jack was left with a pit in his stomach as he attempted to absorb everything he had just been told. Frustration and anger still gnawed at his brain as he attempted to brush his feelings aside. Jack had to admit, he was astonished the guardians had not told him Jamie was suffering from pitch, especially to the degree he had been. A certain paranoia flooded his mind, wondering just how much bunny had influenced the overall decision to keep him in the dark. Regardless of his anger towards the pooka, Jack couldn't help but feel just as much shame towards himself. Would he have trusted Bunny to watch Jamie if he was in the same state he had been, after he had flown off from them in the middle of their search, only to be found unconscious with Jamie crying over him?

Jack dug his hands around Jamie, pulling him snugly to his cool chest. The peacefully resting boy let out a soft breath of relief, allowing his body to relax. Feeling Jamie's labored breathing Jack

slid his hand from the boy's forehead to his chest, pressing softly onto his heated skin. Jamie let out another sigh of relief as his labored breathing subsided slightly, stretching his aching body as his body became more comfortably limp. As Jamie stretched his arm his hand brushed against Jack's fingers, causing the spirit to gasp the boy's hand as he pulled him into the coldness of his hoodie. A quiet noise snuck out of Jamie's dry lips and for a split moment, it seemed as though Jamie had stirred. Jack's grip tightened slightly on Jamie's hand as he waited for the boy to speak, time passed and all Jack could hear was the sound of deep breathing. Hours passed but Jack remained awake and alert, as he waited for something to happen. Above the spirit, Jack noticed Sandy had been fighting to stay awake. A certain amount of frustration boiled in Jack's blood once again, as he wondered just how long Sandy had been fighting Jamie's terrors without his help.

Out of the darkness of the night, Jack finally heard a dry sandpaper voice.

'Jack?'

The teen's eyes widened as he felt his heartbeat rocket through his chest, tears welling in his eyes Jack's voice came out slightly dry.

'Hey Jamie, it's me.'

Jamie let out a few labored breaths before he responded.

'Jack... what's going on? Where are we?'

The child's voice was drowsy, more sleep than he was awake, his voice possessed a monotone quality. Jack pulled the boy into a hug, still gripping his hand. 'It's okay Jamie, you're in the hospital resting.'

Jack waited anxiously as Jamie's breathing went back to being deeper as he didn't respond. After a few moments, he spoke again.

'Are you okay?'

Jack fought tears as he tightened his grip on the barley couscous boy, 'I'm okay, more than okay, don't worry about me. How are you feeling?'

Jamie let out a sickly moan, 'I don't feel good.'

Jack nodded in understanding, 'hang on kiddo, just keep resting.'

The child still had his back to the spirit as he remained silent for a couple of long moments, during which his breathing quickened slightly. Jack eyed the boy's peculiar movement, his concern growing.

'Are you okay, Jamie?'

The boy's breathing slowed slightly as he remained rigid still on the bed.

'Is this a dream?'

Jack blinked before his eyes widened in understanding, adjusting his hold around Jamie's chest, Jack answered.

'No, you're awake, this isn't a dream kiddo.'

'I don't want to sleep. He'll hurt you.'

Jack's eyes shrunk as a clear pain slipped through his chest, a range of emotions flooded the teenager's face as he gripped Jamie's hand tighter.

'He's not going to hurt you or me, I promise I won't let him.'

A worried croak creaked out of the child's dry throat, a tiny whine barely distinguishable as a sob.

'Jack, I'm scared.' The child whimpered softly.

The desperation and terror that gushed from the boy's mouth tensed the muscles of the immortal teen. Instinctively, Jack pulled Jamie's hand in front of his view and allowed the boy to watch his fingers close around his left hand.

'I'm right here, just focus on my hand.'

The boy sniffed and shuddered, his hand nervously intertwined with Jack's pale fingers. The guardian of fun delicately squeezed the child's warm hand. Gradually, Jamie's shuddering breath disappeared to calmer exhales. The quiet beeping of Jamie's monitor simulated the ticking of a clock as the minutes passed. Jamie was silent once more, as the time ticked on he thought Jamie had fallen asleep. After a long period, the child finally spoke.

'Jack..?'

'Oh, Yeah?' Jack stuttered slightly, surprised to hear Jamie awake.

Another pause.

'Am I going to die?'

The way the words were spoken sounded more out of clarification than concern. His eerily calm tone had caught Jack off guard as he lost the ability to breathe or speak. Quickly Jack regained himself and swallowed the lump that was swelling in his throat.

'No, of course not, I won't let that happen.'

Simultaneously Jack peered over to the monitor, checking to make sure the lines on the screen were still active.

'You're going to be fine.' Jack muttered confidentiality into the darkness.

Jamie did not respond, his quiet breathing becoming deeper. Holding the boy tighter, Jack repeated his statement as he watched the lines of the monitor dip and rise.

'I'm not losing you too.'

Night continues

As time passed Jack continued to use his body to cool Jamie's steadily declining fever temperature. Throughout the night Jack remained acutely aware of the child's dreams. Now that the nightmare bug had been destroyed no malevolent dreams dared near the sleeping Jamie. Not even the burning red flames of trauma sand flickered anywhere near the boy as his guardian watchdog stood lookout. Occasionally Jack almost felt himself slipping into sleep but quickly jolted himself awake with a shake of his head. It felt like literal years until the sun rays danced from the hospital bed window, across Jamie's hospital bed blankets. Blinking softly, the guardian of fun watched the playful rays of dappled sunlight dance across the pale walls, spreading a new sense of hope within the once-dark derie room. Still clinging to Jamie's hand, Jack waited for the last of the darkness to be sucked up by the hungry sun before he sat upward. Exhausted eyes scanned over the chestnut-haired Jamie searching for any sign of discomfort or pain. Much to the relief of the guardian, Jack's eyes were met by the healthy glow of Jamie's pale skin, no longer a fiery bruised red. Jack half smiled with relief as he squeezed the child's warm hand in his pale fingers, observing the boy's chest move up and down in his dreamless sleep. instinctively jack peered behind him and found the exhausted Sandy hovering just over their heads observing the same party as jack. The usually cheerful little guardian could only give a faint ghost of a smile and nod towards the fellow immortal as his faux expression slipped once more to reveal the bagged eyes and concerned frown that seemed to have been carved into the little spirit's face. Jack gave a knowing nod and gazed off into the sunrise emotionlessly allowing his cooling grip to loosen slightly on Jamie's warm body. Jack was awoken from his thoughtless trance when he heard the sound of movement from the corridor. Peering backward, Jack caught the sight of a nurse walking past the hospital room door, his eyes darting to the very bed he and Jamie remained in. The nurse popped inside briefly, observing Jamie and taking a few notes before slowly departing the

room. As the man shut the door, Jack's emotionless eyes followed him until he was finally out of sight. Jack sighed and adjusted himself on the bed, turning his back towards the guardian hovering slightly above him and Jamie. Jack could feel Sandy's gaze locked onto him. Not wanting to make conversation Jack ignored the curious guardian's gaze, knowing all too well he wouldn't be able to answer the questions they both had. A peaceful silence filled the room once more until a long-awaited interruption finally became present.

'Jack?'

The teenager nearly fell off the bed with exhilaration as he jolted his once-sleepy gaze from the pink sky to the wide-eyed child lying next to him. Jack choked on his gasp as he locked eyes with the coffee-brown orbs that were welling with tears. Jack shuddered involuntarily as he felt tears burst from the corners of his eyelids. Instantaneously, Jack leaned down and Jamie bolted upward, the pair crashed together into a tight embrace. Jamie immediately began to cry as he buried his face into the teenager's chest, his body shaking violently as he allowed Jack to pull him deeper into the folds of his cooling hoodie. Unable to restrain himself, Jack cried and nestled his head on the crown of Jamie's head, wrapping his lanky arms around the shuddering smaller figure. Jamie whimpered and dug his hands into the navy blue folds, his voice cracking with raw emotion as he sobbed.

'Jack!'

The immortal teen grimaced as he heard the pain in the child's voice, causing his heart to pound like thunder.

'Jamie, oh thank goodness..'

The sandman beside the pair watched the scene with a twisted wound of emotions, tears softly dripping down his face.

Jamie hyperventilated into Jack's chest, his words coming out in gasps.

'I ..I ..I tho.. thought you.. you..you were dead.'

Jack winced, fist clenching as he felt his voice cracking. Guilt consumed the guardian as flashes from their last meeting permeated his mind.

'No..no..I'm okay. I'm alive. I'm fine.' His voice came out as more of a whisper. Tears burnt his pale cheeks, even after he shut his eyes.

"Jack, please don't leave me, please stay.."

'I will, Jamie, I'm not leaving.'

"Please don't go."

Jack quivered as he responded, "never, I'm not going to leave you."

Jamie's sobs continued for a while as Jack continued to hold him tightly in his embrace, his body tensing while pearly teeth ripped into his bottom lip. Sandy watched the reunited friends sadly, lips quivering as he swiftly began to send out another message to the pole. Jack and Jamie held each other for a long time, the sound of the other's frantic heartbeats comforting them and terrifying them at the same time. Just outside the hospital room, the nurse from prior returned, his eyes widening as he caught sight of Jamie sitting up in bed. Nearly tripping as he dove backward, the nurse rushed to alert the other medical staff of Jamie's awakening.

Jack's heart eventually began to slow, however, the pounding in the child's chest remained the same as it had minutes prior. Concerned Jack leaned forward more and traced small circles on the boy's back, quietly listening to the boy's continuous frantic heartbeat, still forcing the tears to migrate back from their origin. Jamie held a vice-like grip on the teenager, fingers pricing into the ribs of the immortal. Quiet sniffing resonated with the child as his wails slowly returned to soft cries. Jack continued to grip the boy to his chest whilst he softly pulled his head away from the boy's temple to get a better observation of the child's face. Jamie shivered in the teenager's grip,

seemingly not from the coolness of the embrace. His wrinkled brow mimicked the curves of his twisted mouth, bloodied and swollen from the nervous chewing it had endured. Shaky breaths vibrated from Jamie as he dug his frightened face into the folds of dark blue fabric as if hiding from a monster he was still able to see. Tears still stinging his cheeks Jack cradled the boy, placing a steady hand along his shoulders to guide his shaky gasps into progressive exhales. The action changed little as Jamie continued to gasp and cough, as if he were a fish out of water.

'Easy kiddo, you're getting there, just go slow.' Jack assured softly, giving the boy a soft squeeze.

Jamie's fluttering heaves relaxed a little, as Jack coached the panicked boy from his adrenaline-filled state, regardless of the guardian's continued effort, the boy shook like a dry leaf in the blustering wind.

'Jamie..!'

Almost instantly the child in his arms shot his terrified expression over to the owner of the voice. Framed by the silver doorway was the cast of the medical crew along with Meghan. Both identical pairs of coffee brown locked gazes with the other as Jamie's breathing dissipated entirely in his throat at the sight of his nurturer.

"Mom!" Jamie shouted tears springing from his eyes once more. With a whimper Meghan rushed forth to her lost son, her eyes tinged an exhausted red. Jamie instinctively turned from the guardian and pushed himself into his mother's arms. Jamie wailed a cry of endless emotion into the woman's soft embrace, arms wrapping around her neck in a baby chimp action.

'Mom! I..I.. thought I'd never see you again !' Jamie shivered.

"Sweetheart, I'm here, I'm here." Megan firmly cradled Jamie's face with her hand, pushing his head into the side of hers. Another arm wrapped around the boy's back and held him in a tight embrace.

'I was so scared...' Jamie whimpered weakly, into the folds of Meghan's gray sweatshirt.

'I know sweetheart, I was scared too..' Meghan mumbled as she lost control of the oncoming flood.

Tears slipped past Meghan's wrinkled face as she bowed her temple, her shoulders shaking as they both cried. Jack watched the reunited pair, his soft frown quivering as more heated tears slipped down his pale cheeks. Sandy passed a bittersweet smile towards Jack, his lips quivering with his faint genuine smile, one which Jack returned upon witnessing Jamie's frightened shakes disappear in the warmth of his mom's arms.

Jamie and Meghan embraced for a very long time until their cries slowly calmed and then subsided. With a loud sniff, Meghan softly pulled away from the fierce embrace coming face to face with the nervous expression of her son. Jack watched quietly as Jamie's breathing became slower, his hands still gripping the folds of his mom's sweatshirt. The doctors and nurses silently approached the reunited mother and son, the head of which being doctor Newman.

"Glad to see you awake Jamie, we've all been worried about you." The warmth from the doctor's smile was genuine as she knelt downward to come closer to the boy. The boy's pupils darted over the doctor, scanning the woman over for any sign of threat. The doctor's smile remained warm as she allowed the child a few feet of space.

'You must be starving, would you like some food?'

Jamie darted his eyes momentarily from the doctor to his mother, as if looking for approval. Jack placed a soft hand on Jamie's left shoulder, causing the coffee-brown orbs to switch to the guardian next to him. Jack gave a small comforting smile to the boy who blinked at him wide-eyed before returning his gaze to the doctor before him.

Jamie gave a shy nod, 'okay.'

The Plan So Far

This took far to long, I really appreciated your patience, had a lot of fun writing this, I will be back with the next chapter eventually.

Chapter 10 - The Plan So Far

The doctors were quick to bring up a small bowl of cereal and fresh oranges for the awakened child. During the preparation of his food, Jamie had a small check-up done on him by Doctor Goodmen, who was yet again astonished to find Jamie's health had returned to normal within the hours of the night. During the procedures, Jamie gripped his mother's hand in a vice-like hold, his wide eyes reminding Jack of a terrified rabbit. Sandy and Jack offered company to the boy whenever possible.

"You're almost done, kiddo, I just need to hear your heart."

Slowly the doctor came forward while Meghan knelt down beside her boy.

"She's going to listen to your heart sweetie, it won't be long."

Jamie nervously stared at his mother before complying with the doctor's demands. The little brunette began to breathe heavily as the doctor's hands steadied the cold stethoscope onto his skin. Jamie's flared breaths continued causing Sandy to place a well-meaning hand along his shoulder. Jamie jumped from the uncommon touch, causing him to spook both his mother and the doctor in the process. Jack shot forward and softly placed a hand along the boy's shoulder, his cooling touch pulling the boy back into his senses. Jamie's frantic breaths calmed and Jack guided the boy through the actions once more, not loosening his soft grip around the boy's shoulders.

"It's okay Jamie, It's done, your food's ready now."

Sandy passed an apologetic gaze to both Jamie and Jack, his aged golden eyes melted with guilt and sadness.

Jack passed a forgiving nod to the guardian and allowed Jamie some space as he was given his food.

The sudden shock seemed to have scared what little appetite Jamie had as he just stared at the meal before him mindlessly, thoughts a million miles away. Meghan sat beside her boy silently, causing Jamie's face to snap toward her presence. Meghan smiled softly at the small child and gently guided him into a warm hug, to which Jamie quickly accepted and buried his face in her arms.

Jack frowned and shared the same troubled expression as Meghan, each gazing at the boy cradled in her embrace. Meghan hugged Jamie to her chest for a few moments before she slowly pulled back and faced the anxious boy with an encouraging ghost of a smile. Unbeknownst to Meghan the two detectives from prior slowly entered the room, giving the boy and his mother space.

"It's okay, I'm not hungry either."

Jamie didn't answer and seemed to be focusing on the two men behind his mother, his face a mix of anxiety and apprehension. Meghan frowned and followed her quiet son's gaze until she realized who he was staring at. Her eyes widened in recognition and she swiftly turned to the nervous child, instinctively placing a comforting smile on her face. "These are the detectives from the police station, Jamie, they want to ask about what happened."

The child nervously glanced from the detectives back to his mother, his wide eyes brimming with mistrust. Meghan's smile faltered slightly, softly the mother placed her hand on her son's, making the child peer up at her.

"I know you're scared Jamie." The mother's eyes never left her son's. "You have been through so much, sweetie, but you've been so brave."

The mother's eyes shone truthfully as she cupped her child's chin again, gently brushing a lock of hair out of the boy's face. Smiling airily, Meghan peered into Jamie's shy expression as she silently scanned the boy's injuries.

"These detectives want to know what happened, I know it's hard to talk about it, but it will help them make sure the men who did this to you are caught and charged."

A flash of anger flickered in the young woman's eyes, but it quickly faded as her comforting smile returned. "You can do this Jamie, I am right beside you."

Jamie blinked his innocent brown eyes, his pupils darted to the side to peer at the two detectives. Both men were staring at him, each looking slightly uncomfortable and concerned. Jamie felt his heartbeat quicken, a glob of saliva trapped in the crevice of his throat. Gulping the boy looked back into his mother's face once more, her lips producing a timid encouraging smile. The child let out a tiny sigh, his body shaking as he slowly nodded in compliance.

After getting the child a drink of hot chocolate the detectives pulled up a couple of chairs next to Jamie's hospital bed and began to introduce themselves. Once the introductory phase had past the detectives paused and allowed the child to speak. The first time the boy attempted to tell his story he found he was unable to speak and momentarily froze.

After some more comfort from his mother and some coaxing from Jack, Jamie found his voice and began to speak. The timid child embarked on his retelling of events, explaining how he and his friends had been playing manhunt and how he had been trying to find a perfect hiding spot which had led to him meeting Eric and Will. The detectives questioned Jamie gently during his retelling, clarifying names, places, and Will and Eric's appearances. Jamie then began to explain how Eric and Will had kidnapped him and taken him to Keith, detailing his ordeal passively. Throughout Jamie's statement, Jack held Jamie's shoulders with a comforting arm, pulling him back

into the present moment when his memories became too vivid. Despite Jack's comfort, Jamie became visually more anxious explaining what had happened when Keith had entered the van and began crying softly during the retelling. Meghan hugged the boy in her arms while Jack gave the small child a soft squeeze with one arm, after a few minutes Jamie continued his retelling.

"After that guy cut my feet free... he.. something really weird.."

Jack tensed.

Joel looked up from his notes, "what do you mean by weird, Jamie?"

The child squinted his eyes and shrugged, fidgeting as he responded. "He pulled me onto his lap, and..kissed me." The child gazed at the ground and was silent for a moment.

A strong atmospheric shift occurred and all the adults were quiet, not so much out of surprise but dismay. Jack's stomach sank, and his eyes drifted to Jamie worriedly.

The boy blinked," he..he kissed me on the cheek and I got really scared so I tried to run away, but then he sat on top of me and tried to take off my belt.."

Meghan covered her mouth in horror, tears bubbling in her mortified eyes.

Sandy floated to the side of the boy, his eyes widened and his mouth agape a contorted aghast expression of dismay. The small spirit shot a terrified look towards the youngest guardian, Jack stared at the little guardian sadly and bowed his head in confirmation. Jamie continued to stare down at his cup of hot chocolate, a puzzled expression plastered on his face. Timidly the boy peered upward and saw everyone looking at the 11-year-old with horrified expressions. Jamie froze for a moment, confused by their reactions while also feeling quite frightened.

"Did I do something wrong?" He asked quietly.

Snapping out of her trance the boy's mother swiftly pulled Jamie to her chest giving him a tender hug.

"N... no Jamie, not at all sweetie, you did nothing wrong."

Meghan held her son for a moment before she let him continue his story, finally ending with his escape and the police's arrival.

"I don't remember coming here," the boy admitted gazing down at his feet, "I just remember being scared."

Jamie watched the swirls of dark coco in his mug thoughtfully, avoiding the eyes of the adults.

The detectives frowned at each other and peered over their notes once again.

"Do you remember being taken from the van?" Randy asked gently.

Jamie's brows furrowed as he thought back, his eyes widened and he nodded, "I remember being in the van and falling out, there was a police officer who was scaring me."

"What was he doing to scare you?"

"He pulled on my wrist."

Joel nodded in understanding, "He will apologize to you in person if you and your mother are okay with that."

Jamie visibly shuttered and Jack quickly side-hugged him once more.

Meghan gave a look towards the detectives, "I think Jamie needs some time to recover."

Randy gave an understanding nod and quickly finished," I think we're done here anyway."

Both detectives got up and wandered towards the door, as Joel was about to leave he passed a worried glance towards Jamie before closing the door.

Jack sighed softly and turned to the little boy next to him hoping to see the boy relax after the detective's absence, his faint hopes were dashed when he saw Jamie's slouched position and downcasted eyes.

Jack observed the boy from the corner of his eye as his guts attempted to untangle themselves.

"Mom?"

Meghan smiled softly, 'Yes Jamie?"

The boy squinted at his drink, his face puzzled.

"What did they try to do to me?" Jamie peered upward with confused and anxious eyes, his face pleading for an explanation for his mindless wandering.

Meghan froze and looked away, her dark brown pools traced the shadows on the pale walls. From the angle he sat Jack watched the mother whisk away the painful tears pooling in the corners of her eyes. Meghan quickly pulled away and faced the boy and his guardian, her hand shook s she placed her palm across Jamie's hand. Jamie blinked and brought his timid expression to meet his mother's broken face. Meghan released a very faint whimper as she swallowed a sharp sting in the back of her throat.

"I suppose you should know.."

Jack clutched his staff and his face darkened, Sandy floated over and placed a comforting hand along Jack's shoulder, Jack did not

pull away.

"Jamie," Meghan stuttered, "I know we've talked a..a Little about sex."

Jamie turned red and his pupils darted to his hands.

"Y..Yeah."

Meghan adjusted her glasses, her voice squeaking. "I'm not sure how much you learned in school.."

Jamie rubbed his shoulder, "we were talking about how babies are made."

Meghan slowly nodded, "have they talked to you about sexual assault?"

Jamie blinked and his pupils shrunk before he slowly shook his head. Jack winced and watched Jamie's hand bawl nervously.

"No."

Meghan's voice shook slightly as she spoke, "People will sometimes force sexual actions on others, they don't follow the rules of consent."

Jamie gazed at his lap in pure disbelief, his wide eyes locked on his hands as he registered what he had just been told. Swiftly the child yanked his head up, his eyes a mess of panic and beseech.

"But..but.. They were way older than me, that can't happen.. Not to kids right?"

Jack couldn't hold his tears back anymore.

Meghan sniffled and cleared her throat, her voice came out as a whimper, "I'm afraid it can happen to anyone, Jamie, kids counted in that."

Jamie's terrified face turned pale as he stared at Meghan in pure shock. His voice trembled as he spoke, "But, why? I'm just a kid..why would anyone do that?"

"Some horrible people don't care who they hurt," Meghan whispered, her voice hushed as it was taken over by tears. Jamie scanned his mother up and down his pale face wide-eyed and blank. Meghan leaned forward and collected Jamie into a hug, "I'm so sorry sweetie."

Jamie's hug back was loose, his eyes had no tears as pensively gazed ahead. Jack sat next to Sandy sadly, their facial expressions the same, Jack's hand burnt.

"We're going to get through this, it's going to be okay," Meghan whispered.

*******Meanwhile*******

The guardian's circled the meeting table anxiously, the painful anxiety wafted between each spirit mixed with the blood scent of fury. North stood head of the table, his usually joyful chaotic nature depleted to a violent business man.

"His hideout is in that tunnel by Burgess lake," North growled "can't be far."

Sandy nodded darkly, displaying a silhouette of pitch and a nightmare bug over his head.

Bunny nodded, "Sandy's right, he must be weak if he's using bugs instead of his nightmares."

"He's strong enough to try and murder Jamie." North growled

Tooth's firm gaze melted as she noticed the severe lack of jingling and general noise, her violet eyes drifted above, her orbs reflecting the faint white sphere in the sky.

"We're going to kill him this time, won't we?"

Her voice hung in the air as all the guardians shared the same answer.

Sandy blinked slowly, his face darkened as he depicted another slide show above his head, the first silhouette being of a van, followed by the silhouette of the nightmare king, before finally ending with the question mark.

Bunny sighed in annoyance, "he tried to kill the ankle biter in his dreams, it's plenty possible he had somethnag to do with that bloody van."

Tooth nodded cautiously, "we don't know for sure though, he could have been mimicking his trauma dreams just to scare him more in the nightmares. I say we find him and get some answers."

North's firm eyes narrowed to slits, "excellent idea."

North's narrowed eyes melted slightly before he spoke, "Do we wait to bring Jack along?"

The guardians were quiet for a moment as they thought over the giant's question.

"Someone's gotta watch Jamie, in case pitch attempts somethang new, Frost is the best to do it." Bunny muttered softly.

North was quiet as he stared at the globe, his mind drifted to their past battle.

"We could not have defeated Pitch without Jack, that was why MIM made him guardian, maybe we will need him."

Bunny rubbed his arm, his mind trailed back to the seared scars on Jack's back, he cringed as he remembered the fleshy bright red marks. The poignant sting of the dead heart monitor ripped through

his large ears, the silent noise encouraged his heart to skip a beat. The rabbit hissed under his breath.

"He doesn't have his nightmares, all he has is the bloody bugs, we can take him easily."

After a few moments, the other guardians nodded in agreement.

"We kill him regardless," Bunny's voice rattled hauntingly, "He's gone too far."

*****Meanwhile with Jamie and Jack*****

It was like Jamie had lost his voice after the interview, he didn't say a word if he could help it. Even when Jamie had been pronounced healthy enough to leave, the boy seemed absent-minded, his thoughts taking him far from where anyone could reach him.

"Here are some clothes sweetie." Meghan placed a neatly folded pile of familiar clothing before Jamie's view. The hoodie and sweatpants made a small indent in the blanket covers, but Jamie did not react.

Jack waited a moment before he spoke,

"Jamie."

The boy peered up from his hands, his attention caught.

Jack frowned worriedly.

Meghan pushed his hoodie closer and gave a faint smile.

"You can get changed in the bathroom."

Jamie's depleted expression nodded as he slowly took the articles of cloth and made his way out of the small hospital bed.

While the boy changed in the restroom, Meghan and Jack waited patiently outside, counting the moments like minutes. Clawing

through her messy hair Meghan yanked out her bulky cell whilst leaning against the adjacent wall of the restroom doorway. Jack stood to the other side of the wall, his eyes trailing from his staff to his feet, the sound of Meghan's voice becoming white noise in the background of his louder thoughts.

"Hey Jane it's me, I'm taking Jamie home now."

A pause.

"He's pretty shaken up, to be expected."

A muffled voice of concern trailed from the phone's speaker. Meghan shook her head in response.

"NO, Sophie can stay, Jamie said he'd prefer that anyway."

Meghan's voice was soft as she reread the Doctor Newman's referral for Lucy the child psychologist.

The couple finished their conversation and bid their goodbyes. Meghan slid her phone into her hoodie pocket just as Jamie opened the door. Immediately Jack recognized the familiar navy blue hoodie Jamie had grown accustomed to wearing. Jamie's fists had been balled and slipped in the front pouch pocket, his eyes cast towards the floor. The last time Jack had seen the boy wear that particular sweater was a much happier occasion compared to now. Meghan placed a soft hand on the boy's shoulder, "Come on Jamie, let's go home."

*****small time skip*****

In the car Jamie remained silent, his brows wrinkled and eyes distant as he gazed out the window mindlessly. Jack stared at the boy helplessly from his seat, his thoughts failing him. Jack caught Meghan sneaking glances at Jamie, her expression as worried as his. A swoosh of red whizzed past Jamie's window, causing the boy to jolt backward instinctively, pulling away from the window like it was

the flashes of a red angry flame. Jack swiftly placed a hand on Jamie's shoulder, the panting boy turned to face the concerned guardian. Jack held steady eye contact with Jamie, his cool gray orbs warm.

"It's okay, you're safe, I'm right here. So is your mom."

Jamie stared at Jack for a moment before he slowly began to bury himself in the teenager's chest, his arms wrapping around Jack's neck. Jack accepted the embrace quickly, wrapping his cooling arms around Jamie's back.

The car shook slightly as the blue Honda pulled into the small gravel driveway. The world remained deathly quiet as Jack held Jamie to his chest, waiting patiently for the boy to pull away. Eventually, Jamie pulled away and timidly opened the car door joining his mom by the front of the house. Jack promptly exited, following Jamie to the front of the home. Jamie glanced backward anxiously as he noticed Jack wasn't right beside him, Jack quickly caught up and gave the boy a faint smile and a nod. As they came to the door Meghan reached for the doorknob, but stopped just shy of turning it, her brown eyes peering down at her boy.

Jamie appeared pale as he stared at the ground, Jack questioned worriedly if he was going to vomit.

"You okay Jamie?"

There was a hint of suggestion in her voice, but Jamie declined with a silent nod.

The door opened and the first to appear was Abby.

The greyhound bolted for the small boy, barking joyously as she leaped into his arms. Jack shielded Jamie's fragile wrist with one hand, the action was unnecessary as Abby's paws were planted on Jamie's chest. Abby proceeded to cover Jamie's face in kisses as Jamie faintly smiled and scratched the dog's head. The dog stopped

kissing Jamie for a moment and simply gazed at him with confused big green eyes. Jamie's faint smile faltered quickly as his gaze returned back to its saddened lost in thought expression. The dog cocked her head and peered at Jamie's scratched-up face, for the first time the dog seemed to realize Jamie's wrist had a cast and did a double take looking at it. Abby's tail stopped wagging as she sniffed the boy's arm before she peered over at Jack as if she was about to speak and ask a question. Jack's faint smile fell and he gave the greyhound a forlorn expression, one which Abby quickly understood. The large dog whined softly and dropped to the ground, giving Jamie a worried look.

"Meghan, Jamie?"

A tall redhead with wild curly long hair poked her head around the door opening, holding her hand was a small girl with equally tangled blond hair. The little girl had a rosy pink sweatshirt and flowery printed pajama pants, a cheerful attire to match the equally cheerful child. Sophie's green eyes sparkled with joy as she caught sight of her brother in the doorway.

"Jamie!" the girl exclaimed, letting go of Jane's hand and rushing to greet the older sibling.

Meghan looked like she was about to caution the girl, but once again the warning was unneeded.

Sophie came to a steady stop in front of Jamie, her eyes wide and naive as she slowly stepped closer. Her bright eyes blurred to perplexion and wary as she scanned the bruised boy up and down with a concerned expression.

"Are you, okay Jamie?"

Without hesitation Jamie came to his knees and swiftly collected Sophie into his arms, pulling her into a sudden sharp hug. Jamie perched his chin on the girl's shoulder, his face hidden in the midst of the girl's tangled hair. The surprised Sophie froze in Jamie's grip for

a moment, before she swiftly wrapped her arms tightly around him and rested her chin on his shoulder. Abby sat beside the reunited siblings, sniffing Jamie's chestnut hair before peering upward toward Jack with a whine. Jack gripped his staff anxiously, his eyes locked on Jamie and Sophie as he forced himself to push the tears away. Jack glanced away as he felt his deep-rooted sorrows mixing with his present. As he turned the guardian cane to face Meghan, the teary-eyed mother shared a similar expression to Jack. The teen peered over to Jane whose wild green eyes had shifted to a depleted expression. Slowly the curly-haired woman stepped over toward the hugging siblings and waited for Jamie to bring his head up. After a long few moments, Jamie peered upward, faint tears sparkling in his eyes.

Jane gave the boy a sad smile, "It's good to see you kid, Sophie missed you."

Abby's panting louden.

"Abby too." She smirked half-heartedly. Jane's grin became sadder as she added in a soft voice, "I was worried too, it's good to see you."

Jamie gave a nod and squeezed Sophie one more time before he finally pulled away. The child rubbed at his tears frustratedly, avoiding the gazes of everyone in the room. Jane bit her lip and glanced toward Meghan before back to Jamie.

The boy sniffed and backed up slightly, coming closer to the guardian.

"Hey Jamie, would you like to take a shower? We can get you some food in the meantime."

Jamie weakly nodded and proceeded to walk up the stairs.

"OH, Jamie.. "

The boy flinched and turned towards Meghan with worried big brown eyes.

"Avoid getting your cast wet, okay? If you need any help just call. "

Jamie nodded and continued walking as a nervous trot accompanied his steps. An uncomfortable silence filled the room after Jamie's departure, all noises sounded 100x louder. The unmistakable sound of the bathroom door closing seemed to snap the adults out of their silence.

"He's safe now Meg, let's just give him some space for a few minutes."

Jack watched Meghan's ponytail bob sadly as she followed Jane away from the steps, her dark brown eyes sneaking looks back. Jack watched them walk away, finding himself slightly uneasy from Meghan's searching glances.

"Hey Sophie, can you help us make dinner?"

The little girl stood beside the guardian of fun silently, her bubbly nature had been strangely muted after the reunion.

"Jack?"

The guardian looked down to find Sophie's big green eyes staring back up at him, her hand tugging at his hoodie sleeve.

Jack blinked away his current thoughts and knelt down to the girl's level, his eyes were warm but no smile accompanied his expression. Even if he had the energy to smile, the girl knew something was wrong already. Sophie's sad orbs crushed Jack's soul as her eyes darted to the steps that her brother had taken.

"Why is Jamie different?"

Jack furrowed his brow, "what did Jane tell you, Soph?"

The girl paused and played with her hands, "Jamie got lost at the park and some mean kids took him."

The girl paused and returned her gaze from her fingers, "was it the bullies from Jamie's school?"

Jack shook his head, "no, they weren't the same kids, sweetie."

Sophie blinked and gazed at Jack worriedly, "what did they do to him?"

Jack tensed his grip on his staff, words failing him as he attempted to say something. The four-year-old waited with bated breath as the guardian met her gaze.

"They hurt him. It scared him quite badly." Jack said simply.

Sophie put a hesitant hand on Jack's arm, "is Jamie going to be okay?"

Jack tensed again but hid it well, with the most confident smile he could muster the teenager put a comforting hand on Sophie's shoulder.

"He's going to be alright, he has you. He just needs time to heal."

Sophie smiled softly accepting the answer she had gotten.

"Sophie?"

The little girl turned and trotted after her mother's voice, leaving Jack and Abby at the base of the stairwell. Jack's smile melted as he watched her run off, curtly he turned to the stairway and began to journey upward, Abby's paws brushed against his heels. The sound of the shower calmed Jack slightly as he arrived at the top of the steps. Abby paused next to the winter bringer, her head tilted as she listened to the drips of the shower, the dog glanced up at Jack before walking towards the shower door. Abby sat down and waited patiently for the boy to step out. The guardian paused at the sound

of a soft thud coming from the far side of the hallway. Jack's eyes widened as he swished towards the location of the sound, staff outstretched like a compass hand. Jack's muscles tensed as he discovered the noise had come from Jamie's room. Carefully the guardian walked forward, staff pointed forward as he neared the boy's bedroom door.

Jack craned an ear closer to the entrance and listened, a faint whirring could be heard just inside.

Jack swiftly threw the door aside, only to find a tiny mini fairy staring at him with her trademark multicolored eyes. Jack dropped his staff immediately, relief blossoming over his face.

"Baby tooth!"

The blur squeaked joyously as she bolted towards the guardian. Jack jumped slightly as he felt the impact of the mini fairy smash against his chest. Frenzied squeaks and sobs exploded from the tiny feathered creature as she buried her face into the cooling fabric of the guardian. Jack's smile fell, muscle memory kicked in and Jack collected the smaller form to his cool chest. Jack was wordless as he held his friend, waiting for the last bit of her sobs to fall from her trembling lips.

After a long time, the fairy pulled away and profusely rubbed the tears from her eyes, an apologetic squeak leaving her lips.

Jack shook his head, "It's okay, everyone's upset."

The fairy emitted a high-pitched squeak before glancing around the room. Reading her mind Jack explained the boy's whereabouts.

Baby Tooth nodded and for the first time, Jack noticed the golden sash that had been laid across her shoulder.

The fairy emitted another soft squeak, her blue and violet eyes scanning Jack up and down. Jack paused and sighed, "He's okay

health-wise, apparently physically he's fine besides the sprained wrist, but mentally he's not great."

Baby Tooth gave an understanding nod, a sad detached expression covering her once anxious demeanor. The fairy's eyes flashed back to Jack and she squeaked.

"I'm fine, I'm tired but that's really it."

The fairy gazed at Jack longer than he liked before she adjusted herself and fluttered back into the air before the white-haired teenager. Her eyes were as wide as saucers as she looked the spirit up and down, the fairy peered both ways before she squealed her question. Jack shrugged in response, letting a hand run through his hair.

"I didn't know I could do that, at least.. to the extent I did.."

Jack stared at his hands as he spoke.

Baby Tooth slowly nodded, confusion still present on her face. Jack turned to face the mini fairy again, his gray-blue orbs studied the tiny spirit's face.

"I take it Tooth told you about that?"

Baby Tooth straightened and nodded, a more urgent tone taking her voice. In a number of squeaks, baby tooth explained her message, her body buzzed in the air like it had been induced with a feverous amount of caffeine. Jack listened carefully, sensing the fear and faint excitement that quivered from her feathered figure. Jack soon felt that jittery energy as his pupils shrunk to dots, fist clenching Jack sat up from his knelt position.

"Are you serious?"

The fairy squeaked in confirmation, her wide eyes mirroring Jack.

The guardian knelt back and peered up at the ceiling.

"How are they going to do it?"

The fairy squeaked again, and Jack rubbed his neck," are they sure he's that weak?"

The fairy nodded.

Jack blinked and attempted to push the confused feelings he had out of the way as he thought about North and Tooth.

"They want you to do it alone?"

Baby Tooth nodded cautiously before pointing towards Jamie's bedside giving a determined squeak.

Jack slowly nodded slowly as the logic of the situation outweighed his pained need to confront the boogymen himself.

"That makes sense I guess.." Jack agreed, his eyes trailing to his hood pocket. "Is there a good chance Pitch will come here?"

Baby tooth squeaked uncertainly and Jack nodded darkly.

"I'll be ready."

Baby tooth became quiet as she hovered in the air, her eyes enlarged and her yellow feather straightened as she announced the new presence with a soft squeak. The pair turned to find Jamie at the doorway of the room. The boy's blue hoodie matched his striped green and blue pj's, while his wet hair was slightly fluffed on one side from his attempt of towel drying one-handed. Jamie's nervous eyes darted to both spirits. Jack gave the anxious boy a nod and smiled warmly, "Baby Tooth just came to say hi."

Baby Tooth's gaze shifted from the guardian to the child, her worried face shifted to a gentle smile as she twittered a greeting. Baby tooth flew closer to the shy Jamie with the speed of a multicolored flash. The boy jumped slightly from the little spirit's speed accidentally pushing himself against the door frame of the door with a sharp thud.

Baby Tooth skidded backward and allowed the boy his space, twittering an anxious apology. Jack stood up and quickly came to the pair, his eyes scanning the bruises along Jamie's chin and wrist.

"You okay, kiddo?"

The boy nodded slowly as he shifted his gaze to his bandaged wrist.

"I'm okay, I guess."

Baby tooth squeaked again, as Jamie frowned at her in blatant confusion.

"What did she say?"

"She wants to apologize that she wasn't here sooner." Jack translated, almost forgetting Jamie's lack of mini fairy tongue.

"OH," Jamie mumbled, "it's okay."

The boy turned to look at baby tooth once more, his pupils tracing the sash that curved around her small body. "Baby Tooth, what's with the..golden thing?"

Baby Tooth glanced at her shoulder and smiled, with a chipper twitter she explained. Jack's body alleviated hearing the joy in the worker's voice.

"She got a promotion, one of the head captains of the mini fairy army."

Baby Tooth smiled and nodded, a faint glimmer of pride sparkled in her wide eyes. Jamie offered a faint smile of congratulation but was quickly overshadowed by his deepened frown. The boy held his arm as he peered up to meet Jack's gaze.

"Jack, can I ask you something?"

The timidity in Jamie's voice felt uncanny, Jack put his arm on the boy's shoulder and nodded.

Jamie paused one last time, his eyes did not leave Jack's stare.

"Did..Did Pitch try to kill me?"

Jack's heart dropped to his stomach, and his smile disappeared.

Jamie took Jack's sudden ridged hand confirmation and his eyes shrunk to dots. Cursing himself Jack bit his tongue, "Yeah, he tried.." Jack whispered simply, nervously watching Jamie's face.

Jamie didn't seem all that surprised by the confirmation but nonetheless, he began to shake.

"Is it because of last year?"

"We think so," Jack passed a glance at the bewildered tooth collector who nodded back.

A more determined expression crossed Jack's face as he knelt down to his knees.

"The guardians are going to hunt Pitch down tonight, you'll be safe from him."

Jamie blinked at Jack, his cautious eyes still uncertain.

"Why didn't he kill me?"

"I stopped him," Jack stated, hoping that his confident tone might soothe the nervous expression on Jamie's face.

The boy blinked and his faint nervous shake subsided.

"How?"

Jack blinked and finally broke his gaze with the boy, eyes drifting towards his hand perched on the boy's shoulder.

"I've been trying to figure that out."

Jack's eyes drifted back to Jamie's confused face.

"Do you remember when I covered your arm in frost?"

Jamie slowly nodded.

"Something like that, it stopped his nightmares from scaring you."

Jamie's eyes widen, and relief coursed through Jack's veins as the nervous child's face held a flicker of familiar curious light.

"Wait, I think I remember that.." The boy looked towards the floor thoughtfully his brows crooked by the weight of concentration.

"In my dream..I remember being chased by those kids, one of them tried to strangle me, but you saved me."

The uneven tread marks of bark stung an impression on Jack's hand.

"You saved me, but, Pitch stabbed you in the dream, he threw you in a lake and you couldn't get out."

The hair pricked on Jack's neck, he was almost sure the bark had cut into his hand.

Jamie stopped his retelling of the story as he followed the strained hand of Jack on his shoulder.

"Jack, are you okay?"

Baby Tooth's concerned tweet snapped Jack out of his trance. The teen blinked and softened his grip on the boy's shoulder, "Sorry buddy, I'm just upset he did that to you."

The lie was completely true.

Jamie blinked at him and for a second looked like he was going to press further, his gaze fell to the floor.

"Anyway, he tried to strangle me too, but it got really cold all of a sudden. It was kind of nice because I felt so warm."

Jamie's eyes squinted and widened before he looked back up toward Jack.

"That was you." He whispered.

Jack smiled softly and nodded.

Jamie held Jack's gaze, and for a moment the guardian saw no distress on the brunette's face. The faint glints of happiness were stalled when Jack attempted to stand up from his knees and a jet of pain engulfed his shoulder. A strange yelp exploded from Jack's lips as he tried to catch his balance. Baby tooth chittered and rushed to the guardian's side, instinctively grabbing his hoodie sleeve which ironically did nothing. Jamie gasped and rushed forward pushing himself under Jack's arm, holding him up.

Jack grunted and steadied himself on his feet before he gently pulled away from Jamie, smiling his best to hide the pain.

"Jack, what happened?" The boy's eyes were wide as he stared into Jack's ghostly face.

Baby Tooth looked from Jamie to Jack, her multicolored eyes as wide as the child's. Jack cursed himself once more as he responded.

"It's okay, just hurt my back is all. Stings a bit now but should be fine in a few minutes.." Jack had a hard time believing himself.

Jamie's concerned expression skimmed the teenager's pained face, worry tugged on his lips.

"Did you get that when you were chasing me in the van?"

Jack's smile dropped and he nodded, "It's okay, Jamie.."

The boy shivered, "This is my fault, you wouldn't have gotten hurt if it wasn't for me."

Jack's heart pounded in his chest, his arms instinctively wanted to reach the frightened boy, but he stopped himself.

"It's not your fault, those sick men and pitch are the only ones at fault."

The boy's eyes flashed to Jack, a distraught frown curved deep into his tearless yet panicked expression. "I never wanted to get you in trouble."

Jack's gut ached as he wordlessly gazed at the boy, his thoughts frozen in his brain. His legs quivered underneath him as Jack rubbed a hand along his neck, the palm holding his staff burnt. The guardian collapsed to the edge of the boy's bed, using his staff he gestured to the spot next to him.

"You want to sit?"

Cautiously the boy slowly sat down, his brown orbs bounced from the floor to Jack's face. Guilty tears threatened to bubble in the corner of his eyes, forcefully Jack banished them with a hard swallow. The guardian allowed his staff to lean against the edge of Jamie's bed before he turned back to face his best friend.

"Jamie, please, don't blame yourself, none of this is your fault."

Jamie blinked at him, clouded disbelief overcasting his face.

"If I had just run away faster, or just hid somewhere else, none of this would have happened."

"How were you supposed to know they were there? You didn't, no one did." Jack interjected.

Jamie was quiet, his eyes trailed to the floor.

"You wouldn't have gotten hurt if I had just gotten away."

Jack's gut sank, slowly he reached forward and placed a cold hand on the child's shoulder, Jamie did not flinch.

The guardian shuttered and Jamie peered upward, catching Jack's soft gaze.

"Jamie, you did everything you could, no one wants to be kidnapped. I chose to protect you, and I'd do it a million times over if I had to. That's what guardians do, more importantly, that's what family does."

The word slipped out so comfortably that Jack didn't realize he had used it till a few seconds later. Jack's eyes widen and he blushed, out of the corner of his eye he saw Jamie staring at him in surprise. Jack sighed and quickly changed the subject.

"I may have gotten hurt, but I will be fine. It's just going to take some time. None of this is your fault, Jamie, I'd die for you if I had to."

Jamie's eyes snapped wide and he gazed worriedly at the teen, "Please don't say that."

Jack cringed, his heart ached. The teen offered his embrace and Jamie swiftly accepted as the teenager pulled the timid child into a tight hug, allowing Jamie to cling to his chest.

"I'm not going to die, it's okay. I'm sorry I scared you." Jack whispered apologetically.

His words did nothing as Jamie's grip remained the same.

Both held the other for a long time, with a tentative hand Jack waited to wipe tears away from Jamie's cheeks, oddly the familiar

dampness never occurred.

Jamie shuttered, "I'm just scared because I thought you did for a bit."

Guilt punctured Jack's gut as he remembered passing out by the crime scene, bunny's words echoing in his mind.

"I should have been more careful, that was my fault."

Jamie's head rested against Jack's shoulder as they both sat in silence, the faint wiring of Baby Tooth's wings eventually stopped as she landed on the far side of Jamie's bed.

Jamie's warm breath deepened as his arms around Jack's chest began to slip. Jack tightened his grip on the boy which seemed to stir the child from his exhausted state. Jamie blinked and sat upward, his tired eyes coming to face Jack's soft gray. Jamie's eyes remained a half closed, a dimmed light reflected back.

"You tired kiddo?"

Jamie's eyelids fluttered and he sighed, "I don't want to sleep." His voice creaked like a weakened foundation.

Jack nodded as he pulled the boy into another tight squeeze, "I understand."

The cold sting of Jamie's wet hair tickled Jack's cheek. The winter bringer glanced to the side of the bed and noticed the towel the boy had been using.

"Let me dry the last of your hair in the meantime."

Jamie slowly nodded and Jack pulled away grabbing the mint green material. Jack sat behind Jamie, gently rubbing his messy brown locks. The boy kept his head down and his shoulders hunched, a timid composure that reminded Jack of a bird with a broken wing. Jack softly caressed the boy's head with his towel, unsure of what to say. The guardian began to pull the towel from Jamie's fluffed hair,

the child's hair rose to tips with an electrified whisper. Shy eyes glanced upward and caught Jack's gaze.

"Thanks."

Jack smiled, "I imagine it was hard to do that one-handed."

Jamie nodded, and a yawn escaped his dry lips, "it was, believe me."

Jamie shifted in his seat, his eyes were watery as he struggled to sit upright. Jack paused and felt the towel between his fingertips. Baby Tooth gave a look between the exhausted boy and the guardian, she squeaked uncertainly.

"Wanna go and eat that food your mom was mentioning."

Jamie shook his head, "I'm not hungry."

Upon shaking his head the child cringed and groaned, he pulled himself away from the guardian's arms and held his aching head. Jack frowned, "headache?"

"Yeah, still sore," Jamie answered simply.

"I can grab you a drink."

Jamie blinked and rubbed his head, "yeah, thank you."

Jack smiled and nodded, standing up the guardian snatched a unused glass from Jamie's cluttered table and sped to the washroom.

The guardian returned momentarily with a cup in hand, his smile faltered as he found Jamie bent over, head cradled in his hands.

"Poor kid." he thought.

Jack stepped forward and offered the cup of cooling liquid, Jamie groaned and took it, gulping it down instantly.

The empty glass was placed precisely back where it had been before. The boy shuttered again as a searing pain erupted from his brain. Jamie whimpered in frustration, tiny tears sparkling in his eyes. The guardian swiftly placed a careful hand along Jamie's forehead, and instantly a cooling sensation began to tickle Jamie's forehead. The boy let out an acute exhale from the initial cold, his breath softening as relief flushed his face, grateful brown orbs trailed to Jack's soft gray.

"Thanks."

Jack smiled, "least I could do."

Jamie's brows furrowed, his eyes darting to Jack's hand, a question formed on his lips. Blinking the boy peered at Jack timidly.

"Do you think you could lie next to me and stick your arm out? If that's okay.."

Jack bowed his head and pulled his hand away from Jamie's cooled forehead, the guardian lowered himself to the top of the sheets, sticking out an arm as Jamie had suggested. The boy lay next to Jack, adjusting his beaten head just shy of Jack's elbow, his body nuzzled against Jack's cooling figure. The teen accepted the presents quickly, feeling much more comfortable prior to the night a few long days ago.

The guardian and child lie quietly for a few moments, Jamie's eyes fluttering shut occasionally as his tired body began to win the fight against his apprehensive mind. Sensing the concern, Jack tentatively brushed Jamie's hair with his fingers, reminding the boy of his conscious presence. The brunette wrinkled his nose in compilation, eyes opening dimly to reveal the fearful orbs within.

"What if he comes to get me tonight?"

Jack frowned and gave the boy a determined look, "I won't let him near you, not in a million years. Besides, he won't have a chance

against North and the others."

Jamie blinked worriedly, "What about you?"

The guardian smiled, "Baby Tooth is right here, she'll make sure we're both okay and she can report to the guardians."

The mini fairy twittered and nodded from the bedside.

Jamie stared at Jack for a long few moments his eyes dimmed with sleep as the fear began to disappear from his brown orbs. Jamie nuzzled closer to the guardian's chest, allowing Jack to wrap an arm around Jamie's smaller form.

A small memory lingered in the back of Jack's mind as he listened to Jamie's breathing soften, a familiar young girl's voice whispered to him in his head. The girl's voice was interrupted as Jack heard a present voice whisper quietly into the folds of his fabric.

"I love you, Jack."

Jack steadied himself as tiny tears threatened to burst from the corner of his eyes.

"I love you too, Jamie."

Jack remained awake that night, his tired mind peering for shadows of any sort, red or dark.

*******Meanwhile*******

Pitch watched his beetle crawl across his thin hands, examining the flurry of legs that tickled his long fingers. With the other hand, pitch propped his head up on one hand dully, his eyelids half closed as he smugly smiled to himself.

"Odd isn't it.." his velvet voice dripped with malicious intent.

"You plan one thing and circumstances turn out another.."

The beetle began to climb Pitch's middle finger, its fine spiny feet scurried further to the king's fingernail.

"I suppose I should have just killed Frost but then he wouldn't have been as distraught as he was." The Nightmare King sighed.

The beetle neared the top of Pitch's finger, antenna swiveling in the air.

"They'll be here soon I imagine, certainly to kill this time."

The beetle lost its footing on Pitch's fingers and fell only to land on its back as Pitch effortlessly caught the nightmare creature with a strand of strengthened nightmare sand. The beetle waved its legs around until pitch pushed the beetle back onto its feet.

"The Bratt is infected regardless of what that pesky winter bringer has done.."

The beetle buzzed and flew into the air, pitch watched with a horrific smile, watching as the familiar whinny of his nightmares returned.

"Those guardians don't know what they're in for."